

DIRTY BOMBS TO CLEAN WATER:
HEZBOLLAH'S POLITICAL TRANSITION
FROM 1984 - 1992

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By

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Abstract

This thesis examines Hezbollah's transition from their violent forms of political expression after their founding in 1984, to their involvement in the Lebanese electoral system in 1992. Drawing on the instrumental and organizational approaches for studying group behavior, this thesis examines the external instrumental factors and internal organizational factors that contributed to the political evolution of Hezbollah from an organization focused primarily on violent forms of political expression to an organization that primarily uses the parliamentary process. Examining Hezbollah's transition and using it as a point of reference, the thesis exposes weaknesses of conventional International Relations analytical approaches to studying terrorist organizations and provides a more objective approach to studying political violence. It argues that the pejorative nature of the term terrorism, combined with problems developing a consensus on defining terrorism, limit the term's usefulness for academics attempting to objectively examine political violence.

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Dedicated to the Loving Memory of

Robert C. McCloy

April 11th, 1929 - November 26th, 2011

And

Raymond J. M. Carignan

July 2nd, 1942 - December 26th, 2011

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Chapter 1: Topic Background, Research Questions, and Thesis Structure

1.1 Introduction of Topic

The success of a terrorist organization is most often measured in terms of either its ability to attain its stated political ends or its capacity for destruction. Few organizations actually attain the long term ideological objectives they claim to seek and the destructive abilities of terrorist organizations have always paled in comparison to, and are often countered quickly by, their state counterparts. Therefore, many foreign policy analysts and scholars have concluded that terrorism is objectively a failure. But what about groups that continue their ideological struggle by means other than terrorism? Before bombs and microchip detonators, there was black powder explosives, and before those explosives there were daggers and poisons. Can the effectiveness of terrorist organizations really be measured by its capacity for destruction? A cursory look at the evolution of terrorism suggests it has been mostly a change in targets and technology rather than in tactics and intent. The attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 seems to have focused most scholarly research on explaining, and recommending ways to prevent, large scale attacks of that magnitude moving forward. Terrorism, however, is only one of several behavioral responses to disaffection with political, social, or economic conditions. Nothing suggests that organizations that are

founded for the purpose of political violence are incapable of transforming themselves into something different when the opportunity arises.

This thesis will examine the creation, and transformation, of Hezbollah in Lebanon from the early 1980s to their first electoral victory in Lebanese politics in 1992. By focusing initially on the cultural, economic, and political factors that facilitated Hezbollah's founding, before moving on to their resistance ideology and activities, the aim of this thesis will be to provide a thorough analysis of not only how Hezbollah came to be a major influence in Lebanese politics, but to explain how they were successfully able to transition from violent to non-violent forms of political expression and gain domestic and international legitimacy as a political organization. Furthermore, I argue that this analysis of Hezbollah exposes the current limitations of the predominant amount of academic research on terrorism. The common view in International Relations, that terrorism is a problem for Western societies and requires academics and policy makers to search for a solution, demonstrates not only the pejorative and problematic nature of defining terrorism, but also the flawed approach of current theories studying terrorism that apply these biases to groups such as Hezbollah. This thesis examines Hezbollah's political transition, and what that transition means in the context of terrorism research, by focusing on the organizational evolution of the group within the context of instrumental and organizational dynamics.

1.2 Brief History of Terrorism and Terrorism Research

Even ancient societies experienced what we now call political terrorism as a form of non-sanctioned violence in response to perceived injustice – that is, violence not condoned by the rules of war or required for the maintenance of public order. The earliest examples of terrorist activity contained none of the pejorative connotations associated with modern definitions. The original usage, in fact, was used to describe the actions of government and those that pursued political ambitions representative of the people. The difference between modern and historical definitions will be highlighted below before focusing on several key characteristics that will be used to inform my research moving forward.

In contrast to its contemporary usage, the word ‘terrorism’ originally applied to actions committed by the state and was first popularized during the French Revolution.¹ The system, or “régime de la terreur”, in place during 1793 and 1794 was adopted as a means to establish order during the period of turmoil and upheaval that followed the uprisings of 1789. Thus, unlike terrorism as it is commonly understood today, to mean an anti-government activity undertaken by non-state or subnational entities, terrorism originally was an instrument of governance wielded by the state.² The “régime de la terreur” was used to consolidate the new government’s power by intimidating any

¹ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 15.

² Ibid.

individuals or groups the new regime regarded as enemies of the people, typically by publicly executing persons convicted of treasonous crimes by guillotine. Early revolutionary leaders, such as Maximilien Robespierre who proclaimed “virtue, without which terror is evil; terror, without which virtue is helpless”, firmly believed that during periods of violent political transition terrorism was necessary in order for the revolutionary cause to triumph.³

Unsurprisingly, individuals and groups struggling to exercise their political will in oppressive states transitioned the definition of terrorism away from being associated primarily with state tactics to one used exclusively by non-state actors to address their grievances. Terrorism in its contemporary usage is a threat that thrives on asymmetrical expressions of power.⁴ An unassailable standardized definition of terrorism is all but impossible to provide because it is intended to be a matter of perception and therefore is regarded differently by different observers. These perceptions, however, are rooted in some fundamental aspects. At the root of terrorism is a person or group’s perception of justice for those misrepresented. The widespread acceptance of democratic governments internationally, and the underlying principle that these governments are representative of the people, has made it so the term terrorism is arguably unable to be applied to these states. The system of international norms for acceptable uses of force,

³ Ibid., 16.

⁴ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Sources of Contemporary Terrorism,” *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 2.

conventions that explicitly forbid the use of terrorism, necessitate that the definition be applied primarily to non-state actors. The nature of international conflict means that in contemporary usage terrorism is mostly a pejorative term, aimed at non-state actors by their state counterparts to discredit any legitimate claim to exercising political authority. Regardless of its usage, however, for the purpose of this thesis a few basic characteristics should be kept in mind moving forward.

Despite the discrepancy between contemporary and historical understandings of terrorism three key characteristics remain constant.⁵ First, both versions of terrorism are neither random nor indiscriminate, as it is often portrayed today, but rather are organized, deliberate, and systematic. Second, the justification and goal of terrorism is the creation of a new and better society to replace one that is fundamentally corrupt and not representing the interests of the people the organization claims to represent. Last, terrorism concerns power and the ability of individuals or groups to express themselves politically and define the limitations of legitimate government. This elementary understanding of terrorism has allowed scholars, such as David Rapoport and Bruce Hoffman who inform much of the rest of this section, to identify the key time periods and similarities of terrorist organizations discussed below.

⁵ These characteristics are discussed at length in Bruce Hoffman's *Inside Terrorism* (p13-45), however, definitions of terrorism incorporating these same characteristics were found across a wide range of authors while researching this thesis. These include Martha Crenshaw, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jessica Stern, and David Rapoport among others whose works can be found in the bibliography.

The necessity of killing the unjust ruler is a notion that lies at the heart of the modern justification of terrorism and that can be found in political treatises throughout the centuries. As far back as Aristotle and the Greeks, tyrannical rulers were considered a pathological departure from the desirable forms of state governance. The famous Roman philosopher Cicero went even further when he wrote that “it is a virtue to kill tyrants”, and that they “should be erased from human society. For, just as certain parts of our bodies are amputated if they appear to begin to appear bloodless and lifeless, so these cruel and ravenous beasts in human form should be cut off from what may be called mankind”.⁶ This sentiment was the driving force behind the foundation of many of the ethno-nationalist and separatist groups during the post-colonial era in the 20th century. The changes to the international environment that developed as a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles at the conclusion of World War I, mainly the application of principles of national self-determination to break up empires of the defeated states in Europe, were reinforced and compounded by the results of World War II.

The proliferation of ethno-nationalist and revolutionary terrorism during the period following World War II occurred for two main reasons. First, it showed that once dominant colonial powers were not unbeatable and empowered marginalized populations globally to pursue their own political goals against systems that were

⁶ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Brutus, on the Nature of the Gods, on Divination, on Duties*, ed. Richard Mckeeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 571.

mostly imposed upon them. Second, the Treaty of Versailles, by creating law that was inspired by principles of self-determination post-World War I, undermined the legitimacy of the empires that were left at the conclusion of the both the major conflicts and lead to the proliferation of resistance groups globally.

Terrorism motivated by ethno-nationalist and separatist aspirations existed well before 1945, but it was only after World War II that the phenomenon became a more prevalent global occurrence. Two of the primary reasons for the development of post-war anti-colonial movements were that the war demonstrated the vulnerability of once powerful empires and simultaneously displayed the hypocrisy of wartime pledges of support for indigenous people and their right to self-determination.⁷ The Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia against British colonial forces and the proclamation of the Atlantic Charter exerted a strong influence on post-war ethno-nationalist and separatist movements post-war.

On February 15th, 1942 the British Empire suffered the worst defeat in its history when Singapore fell to invading Japanese forces. The capture of Singapore, which was considered the “outstanding symbol of Western Power in the Far East”, led to what Basil Liddell Hart describes as the “shattering of British, and European, prestige in

⁷ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 45.

Asia".⁸ Within weeks of Singapore's capture Japan also conquered Indonesia, which had been under Dutch control, and Burma. Hong Kong was conceded the previous Christmas, and more than a year before that Japan had imposed its rule on what was once French controlled Indochina.⁹ Finally, the surrender of the American garrison on Corregidor Island in the Philippines in May 1942 completed Japan's conquest of Southeast Asia, and subsequently the dissolution of the British, French, Dutch, and American influence there. The display of colonial vulnerability by the Japanese fostered and encouraged the post-war spread of not only Asiatic, but global revolt against European domination or intrusion into domestic affairs.

The realization that colonial powers were not undefeatable was coupled with a sweeping ideological shift for states and peoples globally. Starting with the Treaty of Versailles post World War I, the international system began to embrace laws and norms founded on principles of national self-determination.¹⁰ Although individual groups have unique characteristics and arise in specific local contexts, examining the broad historical patterns reveals a connection between ethno-nationalist terrorist groups and the sweeping change of political and ideological concepts following World War I and

⁸ B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: Paragon Books, 1979), 233.

⁹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 46.

¹⁰ David Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 53.

continuing today.¹¹ The acceptance and promotion of principles of national self-determination was the ideological shift that created an environment where terrorist groups could flourish.

The dissolution of empires and the search for a new distribution of political power provided an opportunity for an increased number of terrorist groups throughout the twentieth-century. The post-World War II backlash against the colonial powers and the attractiveness of national independence movements led to the creation of a number of new states often born from violence. Arguments over the justice of international causes and the designation of terrorist struggles as conflicts regarding “national liberation” continue today, with consequentialist philosophies excusing the violence if the cause in the long run was “just”.¹² The philosophical debate is essentially a stalemate, limited by human reasoning and no definitive authority on the matter and has led to the maturation of a new phase of terrorist activity that uses religion as the justification for action.

Many of the ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist groups that define the previous wave also have a strong religious component. The overwhelmingly Catholic Irish Republican Army and their various Protestant counterparts, such as Ulster Freedom Fighters and Red Hand Commandos, the predominantly Muslim Palestine

¹¹ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Behind the Curve,” *Contending with Terrorism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 33.

¹² *Ibid.* 34.

Liberation Organization, are clear examples of nationalist groups whose membership is dominated by a specific religious orientation.¹³ David Rapoport has described modern terrorism such as that perpetuated by al-Qaeda as part of the religiously inspired “fourth wave”.¹⁴ Religious terrorism, however, is not new but a continuation of an ongoing modern struggle between those with power and those without it. Unlike ethno-nationalist and separatist groups, however, groups focused pre-dominantly on religious doctrine have the potential to be more dangerous than previous types of terrorist groups.

The re-emergence of religious terrorist groups has the potential to be more dangerous for three main reasons. First, religious terrorists are often engaged in a Manichaeian struggle of good against evil, implying an open-ended set of human targets.¹⁵ The exclusivity of their faith may lead them to dehumanize their targets because they consider non-members to be infidels or apostates. Second, these groups are engaging in violent behavior directly or indirectly to please the perceived commands of a deity.¹⁶ This is primarily an issue because it removes the philosophical debate described at the conclusion of the ethno-nationalist section.¹⁷ Arguments of

¹³ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 87.

¹⁴ Rapoport, *The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism*, 55.

¹⁵ Cronin, *Behind the Curve*, 39.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ For more on the shift from ethno-nationalist terrorism to religious terrorism see: Jerrold M. Post, “The New Face of Terrorism: Socio-Cultural Foundations of Contemporary Terrorism” in *Behavioral Sciences and the*

justice are irrelevant because the religious terrorist group believes their behavior is not constrained by concerns of human constituents, their laws, or their values. Last, religious terrorists can sometimes display a complete sense of alienation from the existing social system.¹⁸ The goals of these organizations are not related to attempting to correct flaws in the system, making it more just or perfect, but rather are trying to replace it entirely. These groups have a tendency to promote apocalyptic images of destruction as a necessary path to societal purification.

Religious terrorist organizations that promote apocalyptic images of destruction and replacing existing social systems struggle with organizational longevity. By self-imposed necessity these groups are often very destructive, attempting to create the conditions that fulfill their prophetic visions for a new society. For example, Aum Shinrikyo, a small Japanese apocalyptic terrorist group, released vials of poisonous sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system killing and injuring commuters.¹⁹ The attack was not an attempt to simply kill the largest number of individuals, but rather the intention was to demonstrate the veracity of their leader's prophecies about an imminent apocalyptic war.²⁰ The nature of these groups influences their willingness to accept

Law, Vol. 23, 451-465, (2005), and "When Hatred is Bred to the Bone: Psycho-cultural Foundations of Contemporary Terrorism" in *Political Psychology*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 615-636, (2006).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 103.

²⁰ Ibid.

tactics that are typically more dangerous. As prophecies fail to materialize, however, the leadership of these organizations frequently loses legitimacy in the view of their membership. These problems together help explain why many apocalyptic groups experience shorter lifespans and are fewer in number than other types of terrorist organizations.

Though apocalyptic terrorist groups exist, the majority of religious terrorist organizations are not apocalyptic. Political rhetoric often suggests that one religion, typically Islamic in nature, has a propensity to violence more so than another, but the argument is not made convincingly. Violent symbols and mythology are prevalent in every form of the most popular religions. The fact is that religion and violence are intimately bound together as the former often attempts to explain and justify the latter.²¹ This allows charismatic and influential leaders to manipulate religious doctrine to exploit the powerful connection between religion and individual believers. Most religious terrorist organizations do just that, giving the group an aura of legitimacy they otherwise would not possess.²² Typically this manifests itself in combining a temporal social struggle with the cosmic struggle of order and disorder explained in religious doctrine. The psychological dimension of this power makes religious groups uniquely effective, justifying and motivating individuals to partake in suicide missions for

²¹ Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Logic of Religious Violence," *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, ed. David C. Rapoport (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 180.

²² *Ibid.*, 181.

example. Combining struggles the individual can experience in the present, with the psychological and emotional cosmic struggles represented in religion, makes these groups attractive to large numbers of individuals and subsequently affords these organizations greater longevity and resources to pursue their goals.

It is not surprising that religion has become a far more popular motivation for terrorism, especially in the post-Cold War era. The collapse of the Soviet Union discredited communist ideology as a viable alternative to the capitalist model. At the same time the promise of ample benefits from liberal-democratic, capitalist states, failed to materialize in many countries throughout the world. The end of the rigid bipolar structure imposed by the Cold War left those who rejected the capitalist ethical tenets of greed, consumption, and individuality searching for a viable ideological alternative.²³ Amongst nations with predominantly Muslim populations this period has been animated by widespread alienation combined with resurging elements of religious identity and doctrine. This has led to an increase in political violence by certain groups who are promoting their version of an Islamic world view.

The contemporary Islamist call for global jihad in world politics follows the reasoning of one of the foremost thinkers of political Islam, Sayyid Qutb. His prophetic description of an “Islamic world revolution” has given rise to a real political movement

²³ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 92.

based on transnational religion.²⁴ The overall context of this Islamic fundamentalism is the contemporary politicization of religion in countries of Islamic civilization as they undergo structural and moral crises.²⁵ Caution must be exercised, however, when discussing Islamic fundamentalism. Scholars often use the term to encompass all violent groups subscribing to Islamic doctrine, but Islamic fundamentalism is not a single homogenous movement.²⁶ Rather, many types of Islamic groups exist in different countries and sometimes within the same country. Some are state sponsored, used and promoted by one or other Muslim government for its own purposes; others are genuine popular movements created and reinforced from the ground up.²⁷ Conservative and pre-emptive movements have been started by governments in power, such as Pakistan and most notably Saudi Arabia, as a means of protection from revolution.²⁸ The fundamentalist movement of the other kind, with an authentic popular base and more important to the topic of this thesis, has been most successfully demonstrated by the Islamic Revolution in Iran.²⁹

²⁴ Bassam Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics, and Europe: Democratic Peace and Euro-Islam Versus Global Jihad* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 101.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam* (New York: Random House Inc. 2003), 23.

²⁷ Ibid., 24.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 25.

In its formative years jihadist Islamism was an exclusively Sunni phenomenon aimed at toppling local regimes and establishing a shari'a state in the world of Islam.³⁰ The target of contemporary jihadist action is the international order of secular states known as the Westphalian order. Islamists envision replacing this order with a global Islamicate in which the house of Islam based on God's rule is enhanced to map the entire globe.³¹ This is the real issue that defines the divides between Sunni and Shi'a fundamentalist groups – the war of ideas revolving around the strategy and appropriate method by which to pursue the future Islamic order of the world.³² Both the Sunni and Shi'a Islamist narratives are equally embedded into the worldview of the Islamic civilization despite the differences in legitimation underpinning each of them.³³

The analysis of global jihadism as an Islamist internationalism acknowledges the fact that most jihadists are non-state actors. However, the involvement of states like Iran and Saudi Arabia must also be taken into account. The core characteristics of contemporary jihadist groups pursuing nationalist goals are most often associated with Islamic groups in general and Iranian backed groups in particular. Unlike the Sunni Wahhabism promoted in Saudi Arabia, who incorporated Islamic law as a method of pre-emptively shielding the government from potential popular revolution, the root of

³⁰ Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics, and Europe*, 102.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 133.

the Iranian-backed Islamic terrorist campaign is the aim of extending the fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic law advocated in Iran to other Muslim countries globally.³⁴ The Shi'a style of global *jihadism* promoted by Iran is unique because of its character as a revolution of the people and also in its religion-based legitimation.

The Iranian revolution is held up as an example to Muslims throughout the world, exhorting them to reassert the fundamental teachings of the Qur'an and to resist the intrusion of Western influence in the Middle East.³⁵ Their understanding is that the Shi'a are a centuries old minority within Islam, persecuted because of its special, revealed knowledge. This is coupled with an unswerving conviction that secular governments of all forms are illegitimate.³⁶ Using this rationale, legitimate government can only be the result of adopting Islamic law in order to facilitate the return of the Prophet Mohammed to earth as the Messiah. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran has viewed itself as the stronghold of a transnational revolutionary movement.³⁷ In general, Islamic terrorist groups are forced to maintain a focus on violent tactics used to pursue the goal of a global Islamic state.

³⁴ Ibid., 96.

³⁵ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 96.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics, and Europe*, 131.

The sense of alienation and of the necessity for far-reaching change in the world order is combined with the Shi'a perception of encirclement and concomitant predatory defensiveness. The violent nature of revolution is condoned by Islamic jihad, the holy war, against those who impose their illegitimate authority on the entire Muslim population.³⁸ For most Islamic terrorist groups, their violence is justified by both Shi'a law and modern ideological concepts of the right to self defense. This leads to rhetoric casting the struggle as an all-out war from which there is no respite until the enemy is totally and utterly vanquished in order to ensure the safety of all Muslims.

Islam is not unique in the violent symbols and mythology they portray. The fact is that the majority of religious traditions are filled with violent images and have violent histories. Religions are communities that have a tradition of sharing a particular point of view, a world view in which there is an essential conflict between appearance and a deeper reality. There is a hint that the deeper reality holds a degree of permanence and order quite unobtainable by secular means, as religious people tend to affirm.³⁹ The conflict between the two is what religion is essentially about: images both of grave disorder and tranquil order, with hope that despite appearances to the contrary, order eventually will triumph, and disorder will be contained. This understanding of religion

³⁸ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 97.

³⁹ Juergensmeyer. *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, 178.

posits no requirement of violence, however, religion must make sense of violence and incorporate it in some way into the world view it expresses.

While many scholars assume that the French Revolution and regicide of Louis XVI differed in motive from other acts of political violence performed during the Wars of Religion this is not the case. The fusion of religious and secular components is far more characteristic of the rise of modern terrorism than the neatly posited boundary lines separating any secular trend from the religious motivations of the past.⁴⁰ The decades following the French Revolution has seen the international system constantly redefining what it means to be a “citizen” and solidifying norms and laws promoting popular sovereignty as the foremost in legitimate authority.⁴¹ These ideological tenets are frequently coupled with religious doctrine in modern terrorist organizations as the basis for their legitimacy to act, each contributing to the overall sense of an important and irrefutable justification for political violence.

The key to analysing terrorism, regardless of time period and type, is to focus on the fact that it is a response to a widespread perception of opportunity to create societal change in a historically unjust environment combined with a shift in a particular political or ideological paradigm. While scholars seek to create categories and

⁴⁰ Martha Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 30.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

summarize the actions of groups based on ideology or time period, terrorism tied to popular movements seeking greater democratic representation and political power from coercive empires has not ceased or changed dramatically. Rather, the promotion of global markets and shifts from ideologies focusing primarily on state centric criteria to those that promote the rights of individuals has increased the opportunities for terrorist groups to form and increase their longevity.

The above applies to Hezbollah, though in a unique manner. Their Iranian inspired political program and desire for an Islamic Republic in Lebanon eventually gave way to a more pragmatic political strategy that saw their leadership opt for gradual engagement and integration, rather than violent confrontation, with the Lebanese political system. The reason for their creation was, and remains, resistance to Israeli occupation and aggression. What has changed since they were formed in late 1984, however, is the relationship between their resistance activities and their socio-political activities domestically and internationally. The facets influencing changes in this relationship will be what this thesis will analyze and aim to explain.

1.3 Focus of Research and Research Questions

The focus of this thesis was the result of my desire to explain how certain organizations that were created as a response to conflict successfully, or unsuccessfully, transform once that conflict has been resolved or mitigated. This meant that there was

an extremely diverse group of organizations that could have been the subject of this thesis. Ultimately, I chose to focus on the Lebanese group Hezbollah for several reasons. First, I wanted to focus on a group that is widely considered to be successful. Hezbollah has been almost uniquely efficient in areas across a broad range of criteria typically used to assess the success of terrorist organizations.⁴² Second, while other groups, such as Al-Qaeda, remain at the forefront of terrorist research post-9/11, Hezbollah is unique in that they represent a group that has gone through marked stages of transition in their tactics, organizational structure, ideology, and manner of addressing political concerns.⁴³ The focal point of this is their participation in the Lebanese political system. Thus, Hezbollah offers a unique opportunity to analyze not only a successful terrorist organization, but one whose identity has shifted dramatically over its existence.

This thesis argues that several internal organizational and external instrumental factors contributed to the political evolution of Hezbollah from an organization focused primarily on violent forms of political expression to an organization that primarily uses the parliamentary process. Examining Hezbollah's political transition in terms of its

⁴² This includes being categorized the “second most dangerous terrorist organization after Al Qaeda” as listed by the United States Government. Hezbollah has also achieved several of its stated goals, including the removal of American military forces in Lebanon and the removal of a substantial portion of the Israeli military forces in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah also exists in an exclusive group of terrorist organizations that have lasted longer than 10 years. It has also been accepted domestically and by a large amount of the international community as a legitimate political actor in Lebanon.

⁴³ Anisseh Van Engeland, “Hezbollah: from a Terrorist Group to a Political Party – Social Work as a Key to Politics,” *From Terrorism to Politics*, ed. Anisseh Van Engeland and Rachael M. Rudolph. (Oxford: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 29.

instrumental and organizational dynamics exposes some of the weaknesses of conventional analytical approaches to studying terrorist organizations, and provides a more objective approach to understanding political violence.

A cost v. benefit analysis is central to the instrumental approach I will be using in this thesis. The key elements in regards to Hezbollah that I will analyse include; the Lebanese Civil War, Syria's influence in the unstable Lebanese political system, and the structure of the Ta'if Agreement that officially ended the Lebanese civil war. These are the main components I have identified in my research that most significantly impacted the environment where Hezbollah operates and forced them to make decisions regarding their method of political expression moving forward.

The organizational approach is concerned with the interplay of relationships within the group itself. These include personal ambitions of the group's members and leaders and how perceptions of a new direction for the organization affected the relationships between members and leaders. My research is focused specifically on how Hezbollah unified its leadership after adopting a more non-violent approach to political expression and how the organization consolidated support with both the radical and general elements of its membership.

Combining the two approaches will demonstrate a clear understanding of how Hezbollah successfully made their ideological and political transition moving into the

1992 Lebanese parliamentary election. Further, I anticipate my approach to analysing this transition will offer insight into a larger discussion of concepts in regards to terrorist research, such as potential weaknesses in focused research on terrorist organizations that focus on identity in static terms. The terrorism as an identity versus terrorism as a tactic debate will be further discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

1.4 Importance of Research

Although the literature on terrorism is abundant now, the distribution is extremely uneven. No subject in international relations commands more attention than counterterrorist policies does and this is no surprise. The interest in counterterrorism policies and recommendations, however, has not generated an equal interest in terrorist organizations themselves and the processes through which they come to structure themselves, or how they change that structure.

Identifying and understanding the catalysts to Hezbollah's organizational transformation is important for several reasons. First, if there are dynamics of Hezbollah's transformation that are unique – or if this analysis provides further insight into future transformative trends by other groups – then an explanation as to how and why Hezbollah adapted non-violent forms of political expression is desirable. Second, as stated above the literature is heavily slanted toward investigating and explaining the how and why of the violence perpetrated by terrorist organizations. An analysis of how

one successful group transitioned to mostly non-violent actions has the potential to help fill gaps in the literature.

1.5 Methodology and Shortcomings

This thesis will be focused on a qualitative analysis of open-source materials of secondary data. These sources will include academic literature, media sources, books, reports, press releases, statements made by Western governments and their intelligence agencies, as well as statements and newsletters published by Hezbollah and its affiliate organizations. The controversial nature of the topic necessitates that whenever possible I will cross reference information from a variety sources. By thoroughly assessing both academic and partisan information I anticipate generating a clear picture of Hezbollah's initial formation as a group in 1983, their ideological and strategic goals, and their transition as an organization, culminating with their participation in Lebanese parliament after the elections in 1992.

The nature of this research will necessitate a heavy reliance on partisan sources for statistics and information. Inconsistent and controversial definitions associated with studying international conflict can potentially influence the conclusions of information published by certain government and non-government organizations. For example, several government agencies in the United States define Hezbollah as a terrorist organization instead of state actor, despite the fact that Hezbollah holds a majority of

democratically elected seats in the Lebanese parliament. While many Western governments, including Germany and France, agree with the United States designation, a number of Muslim states affiliated with the Palestinian cause, notably Iran and Syria, advance that Hezbollah is in fact a resistance movement and not an armed militia or terrorist group. The following chapter will attempt to address these types of inconsistencies for the purpose of this research.

Whenever possible I will be attempting to use information that can be verified as coming directly from Hezbollah. It is important, however, to point out beforehand that while direct statements from the actors themselves offer unique perspectives, they must be treated cautiously. This is primarily due to the fact that literature and statements that are published by Hezbollah and their supporters may be suspect based on a variety of political and strategic motivations. Similarly, Western media sources often take a simplistic, ahistorical, and partisan view of Middle Eastern politics and social movements and must too be treated with some caution. In general, however, where correlation between the two sides does not exist I will consider information published within the academic community to be the most legitimate.

1.6 Structure of Thesis

The first two chapters are used to articulate the goals, methodology, and theoretical framework of the thesis. The second chapter specifically is devoted to the

theoretical framework I will use to analyze Hezbollah's transition to a legitimate political party in Lebanon. Drawing on theoretical frameworks established by Martha Crenshaw, this chapter explains how I aim to combine both instrumental and organizational approaches to studying terrorism to analyze Hezbollah's political transition. Furthermore it will identify key problems with definitions of terrorism, such as the pejorative nature of the term, and detail how this thesis will address those shortcomings in the proceeding chapters.

In order to thoroughly analyze the evolution of Hezbollah as an organization it is imperative to understand the progression of the Lebanese political system and its influence in creating the conditions necessary for Hezbollah to emerge. Chapter 3 is structured around providing this historical framework and explaining how the progression of political sectarianism in Lebanon created the conditions that gave rise to Hezbollah.

Having explained the historical and environmental conditions that gave rise to Hezbollah in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 aims to give a comprehensive look at Hezbollah's ideological framework and how it affected the formation of the organization's identity. Since their creation to present day, Hezbollah has insisted that first and foremost they are a resistance organization. Understanding how Hezbollah defines resistance, and incorporates this definition into their wider belief system, is directly related to how the

group navigated the organizational factors of their political transition. Chapter 4 explores the core tenets of Hezbollah's world view and seeks to specifically explain the role of resistance in Hezbollah's ideology.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the bulk of the analysis based on what has been examined in the four previous chapters. Here I will re-introduce the instrumental and organizational approaches discussed in Chapter 2 before seeking to apply them to the circumstances leading to, and culminating in, Hezbollah's eventual transition into Lebanese politics in the 1992 election. Specifically, Hezbollah's response to the Syrian backed Ta'if Agreement and their organizational restructuring in response to changing political climate in Lebanon. Chapter 6, then, will provide a brief summary of this analysis before looking to answer some of the more general questions specified in this chapter, most importantly in regards to potential weaknesses in definitions and studies of terrorism in a larger sense, and my opinion on appropriate directions for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This thesis will draw on aspects of several theories and definitions of terrorism. The literature concerning terrorism today is heavily focused on explaining an individual or organizational justification for violent political expression. When examining the threat of terrorism, it is most often seen in terms of destructive capabilities rather than the complexity of issues that might guide such potential.⁴⁴ This chapter will outline the limitations and benefits of two approaches to studying terrorism, explain how they will be combined and used as the theoretical foundation for this thesis, and address some of the current limitations in defining terrorism in academic literature.

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches

In examining Hezbollah's transition from violent to non-violent political expression, this thesis will draw on a combination of two basic explanations for how terrorist organizations behave as posited by Martha Crenshaw in *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*.⁴⁵ Below, this chapter will explore the benefits and limitations of both approaches in detail and explain how they will be combined in order to form the basis for the analysis in this thesis.

⁴⁴ Crenshaw. Martha "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches" in *Inside Terrorist Organizations* ed. David C. Rapport (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 28.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13.

The instrumental explanation is based on the assumption that the act of terrorism is a deliberate choice by a political actor. The goal of the organization is to influence radical changes in their political and social environments, therefore, they work together as a unit to achieve these collective values.⁴⁶ Adopting this explanation leads us to interpret the actions of an organization as a response to external stimuli.

The organizational explanation focuses on internal processes within the organization, or among organizations, sharing similar objectives. This view posits terrorism as a result of an organization's struggle for survival in a competitive environment.⁴⁷ The leadership of the organization ensures the survival of the group by offering varied incentives to members and potential followers, not all of which are congruent with the organization's stated goals. In these cases the organization is responding to pressures from outside sources by changing the incentives they offer or through innovative processes.

While both approaches are derived from established bodies of theory, neither of them can be used alone to sufficiently address the central questions of this thesis pertaining to why Hezbollah shifted from violent to non-violent forms of political expression.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

2.2 Instrumental Approach

The instrumental approach to studying terrorism believes the actions of the organization, predominantly those violent in nature, are intentional. The actions of the parties involved, whether by the terrorist organization or government, are analyzed as if they were engaged in a typical conflict. They are an intentional exercise in a bargaining process between the two sides and aimed at influencing the behavior of the other. The organization using terrorism is attempting to produce a change in the government's political position through violent coercion.⁴⁸ Terrorist behavior, therefore, can be explained as entirely governed by an intentional cost versus benefit analysis used by the organization to calculate the benefit gained by their actions, the costs of the attempt and of its failure, the consequences of inaction, or the probability of success.⁴⁹

Accepting that organizations act intentionally based on a cost versus benefit scheme means that terrorist actions may occur based on a variety of reasons: the value sought is overwhelmingly important; the costs of trying are low; the status quo is intolerable; or the probability of succeeding is high.⁵⁰ Ultimately this approach seeks to analyze and explain terrorist actions by focusing on the organization's perceptions of incentive and opportunity.

⁴⁸ Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). 1-34.

⁴⁹ Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Identifying the existence of opportunities is crucial in this form of terrorism analysis. An organization may not consider translating its ideological goals into action until the possibility presents itself.⁵¹ These opportunities could stem from the vulnerability and availability of symbolic targets (such as the presence of American Marines in Beirut or the World Trade Center buildings in New York) or from resources acquired from foreign governments.⁵² Alternatively, a lack of opportunity can influence a group to attempt to create circumstances or an environment that may foster the necessary opportunities to act.

This popular method of analyzing terrorism has had a significant influence on counterterrorism policy. A major weakness with the literature involving the instrumental approach, however, is that it is dominated by analysis centered on the opportunities for groups to pursue violent actions. The perceived benefits of an action, weighted against their apparent costs to the group, no doubt plays a significant role in determining the types of behavior an organization chooses to use in order to pursue their political goals. There is nothing that mandates, however, that such calculations will necessarily lead organizations to choose increasingly destructive types of behavior. Furthermore, if terrorism is a means to an end, then non-violent substitutes are possible if the correct circumstances present themselves.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

2.3 Organizational Approach

The organizational approach to studying terrorist actions focuses on the internal politics of the organization. It suggests that terrorism can become a sustained method of political expression regardless of its political consequences and assumes the fundamental purpose of any political organization is to maintain itself.⁵³ Rather than strategic action based on opportunity and consequences, terrorist behavior represents the outcome of the internal dynamics of the organization. This means that the personal ambitions of members, particularly those in leadership roles, are important when analyzing an organization's viability and political position. The Organizational approach assumes a complexity of motivation that goes beyond the cost versus benefit analysis involved in order to communicate a political message. The leadership struggles as much to maintain the viability of the organization by developing a system of incentives for their members as they do to challenge governments.

Providing incentives for an organization's members is crucial for the group's survival. The relationship between actual rewards for membership and the organization's stated objectives, however, is rarely straight forward.⁵⁴ Recruits who join an organization may do so for reasons other than ideology. In order to retain their position, leaders must supply various tangible and intangible incentives to members

⁵³ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁴ Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, 19.

that satisfy their alternative reasons for joining and remaining part of the organization. The popular image of the terrorist as an individual motivated exclusively by deep and inflexible political commitment obscures a more complex reality.

Individuals respond to a variety of incentives awarded by leaders to participate in terrorist organizations. This begs the question, what incentives are most common and most effective? Jessica Stern is one of a handful of authors that attempts to address this in her book, *Terror in the Name of God*. She suggests that the incentives received by members are partly spiritual, partly emotional, and partly material.⁵⁵ Leaders can encourage operatives to participate in violent forms of political expression by promising heavenly rewards or threatening heavenly retribution. Stern also points to cash payments for successful operations, offered to the member themselves or to their families, as a powerful incentive used by leaders.⁵⁶ Crenshaw also points to a variety of individual needs that leaders must satisfy citing “the need to belong to a group, to acquire social status and reputation, to find comradeship or excitement, or to gain material benefits” as some of the incentives terrorist organizations can provide members.⁵⁷ It stands to reason that successful organizations will be those that are capable of appealing to broad groups of individuals by offering a mixture of incentives to their members.

⁵⁵ Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Mind of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Ecco Press, 2003), 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁷ Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, 19.

Beyond incentives that appeal directly to individuals, there are incentives that appeal to members collectively as part of the organization. Collective goals appeal to the individual's sense of satisfaction by contributing to a worthy political cause. These purposive incentives are a major influence on not only the organization's efficiency, but also on their stability and capacity to survive. James Q. Wilson identifies three different categories of political purpose that affect the stability of the organization, two of which are important for this thesis.⁵⁸ The first are ideological incentives based on beliefs that constitute a systematic, comprehensive rejection of the present political world and the promise of creating a future replacement. These incentives are most often observed in the wave of revolutionary terrorist organizations discussed in the first chapter and especially apply to Hezbollah during their formative period. The second type of incentive is based on the appeal of organizations whose efforts concentrate primarily on changing the lives of their members. Groups that subscribe to the second form of incentive are likely to focus on self-sacrifice, on living by stringent moral codes, or on conversion.⁵⁹ Both forms of incentives suggest that group stability will be heavily influenced by the ideological focus of the organization and skillful leadership who can create and manipulate various incentives to attract and keep members.

⁵⁸ James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974)

⁵⁹ Wilson suggests that since such groups can never succeed, their despair often results in extreme destructiveness and willingness to take risks. Hezbollah's transition into Lebanese politics and other forms of non-violent political expression directly challenges this conclusion.

2.4 The “Fight Harder” Hypothesis

Accepting that the leaders of a terrorist group view the organization’s stability and survival as primarily important is congruent with another general theory of organizational behavior that focuses on the prevention of decline in firms. The immediate objective for firms and terrorist organizations is to continue operations.⁶⁰ Along with incentives, leaders attempt to inhibit members from leaving the organization. This is most often done in terrorist organizations by establishing what Albert O. Hirschman terms “severe initiation costs”.⁶¹ By imposing a high cost for entrance into the organization, individuals who invest develop a certain stake in self-deception. This inevitably leads members to “fight hard to prove they were right after all in paying that high entrance fee” rather than admit error.⁶² This does not imply, however, that the “Fight Harder” hypothesis is suggesting the dissatisfied terrorist will necessarily commit to a renewed focus and pursuit of violent political expression. Rather, dissatisfied members may influence changing the organization’s political direction. When members of a terrorist group lack the possibility of exit and are intensely loyal, the leaders of the organization may have to use a form of creative innovation to ensure the group’s stability.

⁶⁰ Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, 22.

⁶¹ Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 93.

⁶² Ibid.

Policy recommendations based on the organizational approach are difficult to implement, slow to mature, and have few results that can be displayed to the public because of their emphasis on secrecy and deception.⁶³ This may be why the organizational approach is less popular in the literature, but this does not mean it is less valuable. The organizational approach allows us not only to examine the incentive structures and competitiveness of groups, but also to capture internal and external interactions that can help explain the “how” and “why” of terrorist behavior.

2.5 Combining the Approaches

Terrorism is often conveniently fitted into a familiar spectrum of international conflict and national security threats both by scholars and policy makers. This has influenced most theories to focus on the response to terrorism rather than the problem itself. The instrumental approach is attractive because we can see results and it makes us feel empowered when applying it to policy recommendations. Using the logical rules of a cost versus benefit analysis is applicable in some fashion to all choices made by individuals to some degree. The relatively undemanding information requirements also apply to all manner of conflict regardless of the identity of actors involved. In real life, however, people have mixed motives for everything they do. Individual desires, for recognition or rewards, by God or other people, may influence the behavior of terrorist

⁶³ Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, 29.

organizations as much as pragmatic incentives, such as money for themselves or their families. The instrumental approach may sufficiently answer the “if” and “when” questions concerning terrorist behavior, but equally important for this thesis will be using an approach that can incorporate variables in an attempt to answer questions concerning the “how” and “why” of terrorist behavior. Combining these two approaches will help us explain both the emotional elements that can influence an organization’s willingness to participate in terrorism as well as the logical elements that play a role in crafting a strategy that may include a transition away from violent ideology.

2.6 Problems Defining Terrorism

Finally, a significant problem for scholars attempting to study and contribute to the literature regarding terrorism is establishing a working definition for the term itself. The student of terrorism is confronted with hundreds of definitions in the literature.⁶⁴ Some of these definitions focus on the perpetrator, on the individual’s purpose, and others on the techniques used. Two main problems exist when attempting to define terrorism; the first is that across the literature there is a glaring inconsistency in the

⁶⁴ Stern, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 15.

criteria, and the second is that the pejorative nature in which the word is typically used causes instantaneous bias and limits the legitimacy of any consensus.⁶⁵

The taboo associated with the word terrorism is so powerful that different definitions unavoidably produce different political consequences. For example, if illegality is used as a criterion for behavior that is considered terrorism, analysis would be slanted towards camouflaging state terrorism and thereby excessively focus on opponents of states. If the non-combatant status of the targets is used as the main criteria for identifying terrorism it casts states as the primary perpetrators, primarily because their armies operate on a larger scale and usually kill, injure, or terrorize many more civilians than even the most destructive non-state terrorist groups.

Understanding terrorism is particularly difficult because the term has come to mean many things to many people. The diversity of national perspectives on any single group or event makes the task of creating the international consensus necessary to establish a definition of terrorism that is widely acceptable nearly impossible. Below are distinctly different definitions used by two of the leading law enforcement agencies in the United States. The Federal Bureau of Investigation uses the following on their website to define terrorism:

⁶⁵ For more in-depth analysis on challenges facing terrorism research, including defining terrorism and units of measurement etc., see: Joseph K. Young and Michael G. Findley, "Promise and Pitfalls of Terrorism Research" in *International Studies Review*, Vol. 13, 411-431, (2011).

- Terrorism is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85). The FBI further describes terrorism as either domestic or international, depending on the origin, base, and objectives of the terrorist organization. For the purpose of this report, the FBI will use the following definitions:
- Domestic terrorism is the unlawful use, or threatened use, of force or violence by a group or individual based and operating entirely within the United States or Puerto Rico without foreign direction committed against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political or social objectives.
- International terrorism involves violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any state, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or any state. These acts appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping. International terrorist acts occur outside the United States or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to coerce or intimidate, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum⁶⁶

The Central Intelligence Agency, however, refers to the following on their website in regards to how they define terrorism:

The Intelligence Community is guided by the definition of terrorism contained in Title 22 of the US Code, Section 2656f(d):

- The term "terrorism" means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.
- The term “international terrorism” means terrorism involving the territory or the citizens of more than one country.

⁶⁶ FBI, *Definitions of Terrorism in the U.S. Code*, <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/terrorism-definition>

- The term “terrorist group” means any group that practices, or has significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism.⁶⁷

While similarities exist between the definitions, the fact that two departments working for the same government use different characteristics to describe terrorism shows the difficulty in crafting a universal approach to defining terrorism.

Academics also struggle with creating a working definition of terrorism.⁶⁸ Stern indicates that only two characteristics of terrorism are critical to distinguish it from other forms of violence; it is aimed at non-combatants and the violence is for the dramatic purpose of instilling fear in the target audience.⁶⁹ Adam Dolnik, whose book *Understanding Terrorist Innovation: Technology, Tactics and Global Trends* aims to explain how terrorists use “tactical and technological innovations” in order to become more dangerous, defines terrorism as “the use or threat of use of anxiety inducing, extranormal violence for political purposes by any individual, or group, when such action is intended to influence the attitudes and behavior of a target group wider than the immediate victims”.⁷⁰ Last, Noam Chomsky a leading scholar uses several definitions he argues are acceptable including “the calculated use of violence or threat

⁶⁷ CIA, *Terrorism FAQs*, <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/terrorism-faqs.html>

⁶⁸ The issues defining terrorism are not exclusive to any single discipline of academic research. For an interdisciplinary approach to defining terrorism see: Lanier Burns, “Toward a Contemporary Definition of Terrorism” in *Forum on Public Policy: A Journal of the Oxford Round Table*, Fall, 1-29, (2011).

⁶⁹ Stern, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 16.

⁷⁰ Adam Dolnik, *Understanding Terrorist Innovation: Technology, Tactics, and Global Trends* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 4.

of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature...through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear”.⁷¹ Stern’s definition focuses on non-combatants and the use of fear, ignoring that physical destruction can very well be the focus and intent of terrorist groups.⁷² Dolnik’s version includes extranormal violence as a characteristic in order to limit his definition to non-state actors.⁷³ Finally, Chomsky’s definition is the most inclusive of the three, allowing for state actors and all forms of violence against a variety of targets, but is met with the most resistance because it inevitably leads to the conclusion that states have been the primary perpetrators of terrorism.

Even when consensus on certain characteristics of terrorism can be reached, their inconsistent use by those contributing to the literature poses another problem when forming a comprehensive definition of terrorism. For example, many definitions consider terrorism something that is only targeted at non-combatants but even that term is controversial. A clearly marked soldier on a battlefield is unquestionably a combatant, but what if their country is not at war and the soldier is in a military housing complex? What if the soldier is in a transport that is also carrying a number of civilians? What about those working at the Department of Defense in the Pentagon

⁷¹ Noam Chomsky, “Terrorism: American Style” *World Policy Journal*, 24.1 (2007), 44.

⁷² For a more in-depth look at apocalyptic terrorism see Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 121-129.

⁷³ Dolnik defines extranormal violence to be “violent actions other than traditional state conflict”

when it was attacked by Al-Qaeda operatives on September 11th, 2001? These are just a handful of the problematic situations that exist when using only one of the typical characteristics used to define terrorism. As more characteristics are fleshed out, the problem of using them consistently grows exponentially.⁷⁴

The pejorative nature of term, often used in the rhetoric used to denounce the actions of certain organizations politically, is at least partially at fault for the difficulty of defining terrorism. By using Chomsky's definition cited above it leads us to the unacceptable conclusion that certain states have successfully used terrorism more than even the most notorious groups recognized internationally as terrorist organizations. This conclusion would obviously be rejected by the majority of western policy makers and a significant number of scholars, leading many students of terrorism to abandon the effort of creating a working definition because it may simply be too difficult.⁷⁵ The personal attachment of individuals who use the term to describe something "wrong" highlights an underlying issue when using terrorism to describe political violence: it necessitates a dichotomy between those describing and those being described. Crafting a definition of terror that applies solely to the terror that "they" carry out against "us

⁷⁴ For analysis on how problems defining terrorism directly relate to Hezbollah see: Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders, "Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, 'terrorism' and the politics of perception" in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 173-197, (2005).

⁷⁵ For challenges defining terrorism both pre and post 9/11 see: Upendra D. Acharya, "War on Terror or Terror Wars: The Problem in Defining Terrorism" in *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 653-670, (2009).

and our clients”, but excludes the terror that “we and our clients” carry out against them is impossible to do rationally. Examining western foreign policy over the last one hundred years when discussing terrorism displays a rejection of a basic moral principle: that we apply to ourselves the same standards we do to others, if not more stringent ones.⁷⁶ Acceptable definitions of the terms do become an extremely difficult matter, not because the facts are unclear, rather because they are very clear and reach the wrong conclusions.

Difficulties adequately describing terrorism are unlikely to be resolved any time soon. Discussion regarding the key issues was included in this chapter to facilitate several key points. First, while the primary goal of this thesis is to analyze Hezbollah’s transition from violent to non-violent forms of political expression, acknowledging that Hezbollah has been labeled a terrorist group is not a point of contention in my research. Whether or not this label is appropriate has no bearing on explaining how and why the organization evolved. Second, in refusing to address their widely contested label as terrorists, this thesis is not making an argument to support or discredit either side of the argument. Last, highlighting the difficulties inherent to establishing a working definition of terrorism was meant to justify why beyond this chapter this thesis will mention terrorism sparingly, if at all. The key to this research is the relationship

⁷⁶ Chomsky, *Terrorism: American Style*, 45.

between Hezbollah's objectives, their process for deciding how best to pursue said objectives, and the influence organizational and instrumental factors had in this process. Attempting to establish a comprehensive definition of terrorism inevitably will shift the focus away from the main purpose of this thesis – analyzing how and why Hezbollah moved from violent to non-violent forms of political expression.

Chapter 3: A Brief History of the Lebanese Political System and the Founding of Hezbollah

The distribution of power and authority in Lebanese government is based almost entirely on a sectarian formula that is meant to arrange a balanced representation between Christian and Muslim Lebanese in parliamentary positions. In the Lebanese parliament, for example, the President is always a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker a Shi'a Muslim, and so on in an effort to divide influence equally betwixt the groups.⁷⁷ Attempts to balance the distribution of political authority in any system are not without challenges. Uniquely prominent to sectarian systems, however, is how they create, shape, and reinforce exclusivist identities among many individuals. Historically in Lebanon this has significantly hindered the development of strong, cohesive, cross-communal linkages within the country.⁷⁸ The focus, however, is not the debilitating impact sectarianism has on national governance and the authority of national institutions, but rather with asking how communal groups, such as Hezbollah, acquire legitimacy and authority vis-à-vis their main constituency, in this case, the Shi'a of Lebanon.

⁷⁷ Samer N. Abboud and Benjamin J. Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah: Legitimacy, Authority, Violence* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2012), 13.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

The following is not meant to be an exhaustive look at the history of Lebanon and its political system, but instead is focused on identifying key aspects of the country's history and the geopolitical, cultural, and religious influences that created an environment for Hezbollah's creation. In order to complete a thorough analysis of the relationship between the organizational and instrumental influences on the transformation of Hezbollah's political expression, it is necessary to understand geopolitical and historical factors that shaped these influences and the relationship of Hezbollah's creation as a response. The history of the political system in Lebanon directly relates to my thesis because it defines the environment where Hezbollah functions and allows us to understand significant influences on the organization's methods of operation. This chapter is structured around explaining how regional differences contributed to political sectarianism in Lebanese government structures, how those structures influence the distribution of political-economic authority through constitutional and intra-communal mechanisms, and how those conditions enable a group such as Hezbollah to be formed in Lebanon.

3.1 Brief Geopolitical History of Lebanon: Ottoman Empire to Constitutional Independence

Modern Lebanon, found on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, is a small republic that stretches approximately 4,036 square miles and hosts a population of

nearly five million.⁷⁹ Between 1516 and 1918 the territory fell under Ottoman sovereignty and officially was divided into two regions. A northern region formed part of the province of Tripoli, and a southern region forming part of the province of Sidon.⁸⁰ In 1864 these regions were redefined. The province of Beirut absorbed the territories of both Tripoli and Sidon, while the Biqa in northern Lebanon was absorbed by the province of Damascus.⁸¹ The communal differences between the groups were predominantly religious in nature and were dominated theologically by Christian, Islamic, and, to a lesser extent, Jewish faiths. The religious and cultural diversity of the region created significant barriers to dividing geographical provinces, government influence, and establishing a functional political system in the country.

Ottoman subjects were divided along the religiously based distinction codified in the *millet* system⁸², which established a two-tier hierarchy between the higher community, made up of Muslims, and a lower community that paid a 'protection tax', the Christians and Jews.⁸³ The sectarian division of these groups had a distinct implication on the social division of labour in Lebanon. Christians and Jews tended to

⁷⁹ World Population Prospects The 2012 Revision: Highlights and Advance Tables in Economic and Social Affairs. Accessed online: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Documentation/pdf/WPP2012_HIGHLIGHTS.pdf February 20th 2014. 53.

⁸⁰ K.S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1965), xi.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² For an in depth analysis of the millet system used by the Ottoman's and the religious and political divisions in Lebanon during the Ottoman Empire see Salibi, Traboulsi, and Fieldhouse at length.

⁸³ Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London : Pluto Press, 2007), 3.

specialize in commerce, finance, and handicrafts. By contrast, the labour of the Muslim community was focused on roles associated with administration and tribal-warrior functions.⁸⁴ This uneven distribution is important to note because, as Lebanon evolved as a nation state over the next two centuries, social and political conflicts that were largely economic in nature were ultimately transformed into sectarian conflicts.⁸⁵ These conflicts would continue to persist after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and be further instigated by the French census and division of government institutions amongst the groups by French authorities in the Mandate Era.

After France was declared the Mandate Authority over Lebanon, political authority began to be distributed across a wider range of actors at the central and local levels of government. On August 31, 1920, the French Mandatory Authorities officially created Greater Lebanon, separating the state from Syria and expanding their borders to include the Shi'a-populated areas of the South and the Bika.⁸⁶ Similar to other eastern Arab states, such as Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Iraq, modern Lebanon's borders were created as part of the partition process between Paris and London of the ex-Ottoman Empire and imposed against the will of the majority of its population.⁸⁷ Lebanese Christians had called for expansion and distinct separation from the rest of Syria,

⁸⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Joseph Olmert "The Shi'is and the Lebanese State" in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), 192.

⁸⁷ Traboulsi. *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 75.

strongly desiring some form of French protection. By 1926, Greater Lebanon had been declared a Republic and its modern day borders defined.⁸⁸ The new Republic brought under its authority the diverse range of communities in the area.⁸⁹ The Mandate Authority, in response, based their institutions on sectarian divisions as a response to the pluralities they inherited.

Many Lebanese in 1926 would have had more familiarity, socio-cultural affinity, and economic ties with areas that were declared part of Palestine or Syria than they would with their co-nationalists.⁹⁰ In response to the pluralities inherited by the French, parliament was created on the basis of sectarian representation, with each community promised parliamentary positions and influence in the new Lebanese Republic.⁹¹ Despite the veneer of equality seemingly provided by the new parliament, the constitution was drafted in a manner that ensured Maronite hegemony under French protection. The Maronite Christians welcomed the French presence as a means to guarantee their prominence in a heavily populated Muslim region and France reciprocated this loyalty in how they shaped the institutions of Lebanese government.

⁸⁸ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 19.

⁸⁹ For an in-depth look at the changes to the Lebanese political system in the Mandate Era see: Max Weiss, "Institutionalizing Sectarianism: The Lebanese Ja'fari Court and Shi'i Society under the French Mandate" in *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 371-407, (2008).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

The French constructed the Lebanese government in a way that concentrated authority in positions reserved for Maronite Christians. For example, the system apportioned seats between Maronite Christians and Muslims in a 6 to 5 ratio, one that was proportionate to the population sizes at that time.⁹² Similarly, the position of President, the most powerful position in Lebanese parliament, could only be filled by a Maronite Christian.⁹³ This increasingly raised the ire of the other, specifically Muslim, groups. As the official authority in Lebanon, the French had to placate these groups in order to maintain order in the region. They did so by creating linkages between sects, or regions, to the central state through posts in parliament.⁹⁴ These communal linkages had long-term consequences on the ways in which individuals and groups can express themselves politically in Lebanon. Unlike Western democratic states, expression of political agency in Lebanon is not determined by citizenship but rather by membership in a sectarian community.⁹⁵ This further creates and shapes exclusivist identities within groups in Lebanon and promotes the reinforcement of sectarian value systems in the population. Even though the division of influence and representation in parliament was not equal, the system itself promoted the line of reasoning that every group had the ability to participate based on sectarian linkages and nothing else.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 20.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Regardless of the inequality of the division of power in the Lebanese parliament, this was the beginning of a new relationship between the Shi'a population and the Lebanese state. For the first time, there was a political interest on the part of the Shi'a leadership in the existence of an independent Lebanese entity based on the guaranteed proportional representation of different religious communities.⁹⁶ The Shi'a representatives of the Lebanese Chamber refused to support the Arab nationalist call for unity between Lebanon and Syria, stating that a separate Lebanon was the only circumstance in which they would have an opportunity to play a prominent role in the political system.⁹⁷ This was reinforced by the creation of a Ja'fari *madhab* (school of jurisprudence) in 1926. These courts were the first Shi'a institution to enjoy communal autonomy granted by the state and were responsible for adjudicating on matters of personal status, such as divorce or inheritance, using Shi'a law. The Shi'a population was increasingly included in the bureaucratization of Lebanese government. Coupling that with the practice of Shi'a law in these courts and a new kind of Shi'a sectarianism was beginning to form in Mandate-era Lebanese institutions.

The defining compromise of Lebanese politics was the *mithaq al-watani* or National Pact, an unwritten understanding between the dominant political communities – the Sunni Muslims and the Maronite Christians – that would provide the

⁹⁶ Olmert. *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, 192.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

terms of reference for Lebanon's independence. Similar to the creation of past institutions throughout Lebanese history, various offices of state were portioned out to the communities. For the first time, however, the Shi'a population was officially included in the allocation of Lebanese parliamentary positions in the form of the speakership of the Chamber of Deputies.⁹⁸ Appropriating this significant government position to the Shi'a allowed them to officially participate in Lebanese parliament and competition over it was fierce amongst the leading families in the community.

Throughout the Ottoman Empire and Mandate Era of Lebanese history there has been a constant struggle between the diverse cultural groups in the region, but also between the region as a whole and those with authority over it. The response to these theological and cultural differences has been a sectarian system that often left the Shi'a marginalized, under represented, and disenfranchised. The creation of the courts and Shi'a specific positions suggest important patterns of communal differentiation that are relevant to our understanding of sectarianism in Lebanon and its influence on the creation of Hezbollah. First among these relationships is the distinct sectarian links of citizens to the state. A citizen's relationship to the state is one that passes directly through their sectarian affiliation in Lebanon. This inevitably leads to patterns of differentiation that foster exclusion from both the state and other sects. The second, and

⁹⁸ Ibid., 193.

more important, is the influence of these links on creating possibilities for specific communal identities to develop as related to institutional and political differentiations. The institutional structure of the Mandate state reinforced and consolidated the authority of the clerical classes, contributed to their growth in authority, and allowed them an institutional setting through which to govern over the lives of the community beyond their places of worship. Each community in Lebanon further entrenched themselves within their own viewpoints while simultaneously connecting to their identity of the state. This developing power structure would set the stage for increased political activism and eventually civil war.

3.2 Mobilization of the Shi'a in Lebanon and Musa al-Sadr

Even though the Shi'a were formally recognized in the National Pact, granted access to the Lebanese political system, and were beginning to develop political links between the state and their communities, the Shi'a population at large suffered from gross neglect and discrimination by the machinery of the state. The majority of the population was consolidated in the south, where sickness, illiteracy, poverty, and thirst were common place.⁹⁹ The socio-economic turmoil in these communities in comparison to other regions in Lebanon, coupled with Shi'a under representation in parliament, and

⁹⁹ Ibid., 194.

thus inability to create change, would eventually lead to a mass migration to urban centres and a strengthening demand for a more politically active Shi'a community.

The Lebanese economy began to strengthen during these years of mobilization, with many Shi'a moving to Beirut, a city that had become the centerpiece of Lebanese wealth and consumption. Yet, for the Shi'a living in both rural and urban areas of Lebanon the income disparities were growing. In 1971, the average Shi'a family income was 4,532 Lebanese pounds, in comparison to the national average of 6,247 Lebanese pounds, and constituted the highest percentage of families earning less than 1,500 Lebanese pounds at twenty two percent.¹⁰⁰ According to every indicator, the Shi'a were at the very bottom of the socio-economic ladder.¹⁰¹ In the end, the effect of Shi'a migration to urban centers was a growing awareness of the inequities of Lebanese society, not only in urban centers like Beirut, but also in the South where the Palestinian organizations were based.¹⁰² This awareness would eventually translate into political mobilization in the Shi'a community.

The socio-economic changes resulting from the mass migration of Lebanese to urban centers and new government institutions was translated only gradually into political mobilization in the Shi'a community. The Shi'a community lacked a genuinely

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

participatory political tradition.¹⁰³ While the other religious communities in Lebanon were represented by their respective political parties, there was no Shi'a political party that articulated Shi'a grievances as their primary concern. In the absence of a Shi'a party, young Shi'a started to fill the ranks of the Leftist and radical parties, such as the Lebanese Community Party and Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party.¹⁰⁴ As a group, the Shi'a in Lebanon remained politically disorganized and inefficient, lacking representation that could be defined as specifically Shi'a.

Though the Shi'a population had begun to mobilize around issues of socio-economic deprivation they still lacked the coordinated structure and political organization through which to do so as Shi'a. This mobilization would drastically change when Musa al'Sadr, an Iranian cleric of Lebanese descent, became the *mufi* (religious judge/authority) of the city Tyre, the only major city in Lebanon where the Shi'a formed a majority.¹⁰⁵ His goals in Lebanon were to improve the material conditions of the Lebanese Shi'a, to shield them from Israeli aggression, provide support for the Palestinian cause, and anti-Shah activism.¹⁰⁶ While much can be said about al-Sadr's time in Lebanon, the most important element pertaining to our discussion was his ability to organize the Shi'a population politically. The first step he

¹⁰³ Ibid., 196.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 26.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 27.

took in doing so was to establish a Shi'a religious council which would enjoy official recognition similar to that of the council in the other Lebanese communities. While the French decree in 1926 had authorized the establishment of Shi'a religious courts, it was not until 1967 that the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies approved the establishment of the Supreme Islamic Shi'a Council (SISC), due in large part to the political maneuvering of al-Sadr.¹⁰⁷ On May 18, 1969, al-Sadr was elected Chairman, a post he occupied until his disappearance in 1978 and used to advance his claim to lead the entire community.

Following the official recognition of the SISC, al-Sadr continued to successfully rally the Lebanese Shi'a politically to his cause through his appeal to both traditional Shi'a symbolism and to a pluralistic and inter-communal image of Lebanon. In 1974 Al-Sadr founded the *Harakat al-Mahrumin* (Movement of the Deprived), which created in 1975 a military wing called *Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnaniya* (Lebanese Resistance Detachments). The two groups eventually fused together to become a political party known as *Amal* (The Movement of Hope). This marked two important steps for the Shi'a in Lebanon. First, establishing a sectarian militia made it implicitly clear that armed struggle was a viable means to achieving political gains. The first political party with specifically Shi'a interests and leadership was founded on ideological principles that focused on armed resistance. Unsurprisingly Shi'a organizations in Lebanon,

¹⁰⁷ Olmert, *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, 198.

including Hezbollah, have made armed resistance part of how they justify their existence. Second, by expanding the courts recognition to include the SISC, the Shi'a community was linked to the state in new ways that fostered the development of specifically Shi'a sectarian identities.¹⁰⁸ This was accomplished by institutionalizing Shi'ism in Lebanon through the creation of legal space for Shi'a to advocate for their individual rights in accordance with their own legal and religious practices that was equal to other sects. That in turn promoted a sense of citizenship and political stake in Lebanon within the Shi'a community. Shi'a participation in both violent and non-violent expressions of political self-determination would continue to gain momentum through the civil war and play a major role in influencing the emergence of Hezbollah.

3.3 The Lebanese Civil War and Israeli Invasion of Lebanon

The civil war (1975-1989) was the immediate context in which Hezbollah was borne. The collapse of, and inflexibility in light of demographic changes, post-1943 authority sharing agreements created an environment where many communities felt socio-economic exclusion from the post-independence growth in Lebanon. The outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in 1975 served to elevate the suffering of Lebanese Shi'a already caught in the middle of the Palestinian resistance fighters and the Israelis. While various groups participated in the violence, the conflict was primarily between

¹⁰⁸ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 27.

two broad camps: the Phalange Party and its mainly Christian allies in the Lebanese Front (LF) and the Palestinian and mainly Muslim groups allied under the umbrella of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM). In an attempt to eliminate the Palestinian threat Israel also invaded Lebanon in 1978, then again in 1982, while simultaneously sponsoring the Southern Lebanese Army (SLA) who served as their proxy force in the Southern occupation zone and participated heavily in the fighting. The conflict between these interconnected groups served to seriously compound Shi'a suffering and increase their demands for representation and resistance to the Israeli occupation.

The ongoing conflict increased the suffering of the Shi'a population, especially in southern Lebanon. A large portion of the Shi'a population associated their struggles to those of the Palestinians, cooperating with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) guerilla forces in the region. A year into the civil war, over 100,000 Shi'a were driven from their homes in south Lebanon, and by 1977 an Israeli-backed Lebanese militia purposely targeted Shi'a villages in the south as retaliation for their support of Palestinian fighters.¹⁰⁹ The constant Israeli aggression, focused primarily on eliminating the Palestinian guerilla presence in the south, served only to aggravate the civil war.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 30.

In 1978, Israel initiated Operation Litani, invading Lebanese territory and forcing Palestinian guerillas north of the Litani River.¹¹⁰ The attack killed thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese, both fighters and civilians, and established an Israeli occupation zone from Lebanon's southern border up to the Litani.¹¹¹ The hostile Palestinian military presence in towns and cities, and interference in people's daily lives, resulted in clashes and an attitude of aversion from the Shi'a population in southern Lebanon.¹¹² The civil war was unraveling in Lebanon while a regional army occupied its southern territory and a guerilla force was displaced into the general population. Arguably, no group suffered more from these factors than the Shi'a in Lebanon which led to unrest in the population and resentment towards not only Israel, but also the Palestinian forces.

In response to the Israeli occupation the United Nations Security Council drafted Resolutions 425 and 426, pressing Israel to withdraw from Lebanese territory and allow the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to take up positions between the border and the Litani.¹¹³ The Israeli military did end up withdrawing from the region, but not before establishing a military relationship with the South Lebanon Army (SLA) in an attempt to eliminate any military activity against Israel. The general disdain by the

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (London: SAQI Books, 2005), 87.

¹¹³ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 30.

Shi'a in southern Lebanon for the Palestinian military presence led Israel to assume that armed resistance to another invasion would be minimal and not supported by the civilian population.¹¹⁴

Even after their withdrawal, Israel remained poised to assault, and retaliate against, Palestinian forces in Lebanon. Both the SLA and UNIFIL proved incapable of preventing Palestinian guerilla attacks into northern Israel. Tensions increased on both sides until July 3rd, 1982, when the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom survived an attack in front of London's Dorchester Hotel.¹¹⁵ On July 4, 1982, Israel announced that the attack constituted a breach of the ceasefire accord with the PLO from 1981 and justified their second invasion of south Lebanon, moving passed the Litani towards Beirut's southern border, to eliminate Palestinian targets.¹¹⁶ This occupation would encompass well over fifty percent of Lebanon's land mass. The second Israeli invasion and its subsequent occupation would come to represent the moment that accelerated the emergence of Hezbollah, a new religious based resistance movement with Shi'a Islam as its ideological inspiration, and the Iranian revolution as its political

¹¹⁴ Qassem, *Hizbullah*, 87.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

inspiration.¹¹⁷ By occupying Lebanon rather than promptly withdrawing after their offensive, Israel provided conditions for Hezbollah to grow.

The civil war directly encouraged a period of conviction for transition among the Shi'a in Lebanon. This led to the resurgence in popular support for Amal among the Shi'a of southern Lebanon, particularly after the example set by the Shi'a-led Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1978-79.¹¹⁸ During this period Amal struggled to consolidate its hierarchy and organizational structure in the face of ideological currents and disagreements among its leadership.¹¹⁹ The most agreed upon tenets of their organization were disdain for the *zu'ama* (political bosses), who had traditionally dominated Shi'a society, anger toward the Palestinian guerillas and their allies, and lastly, hatred toward Israel after their occupation had overstayed its welcome in southern Lebanon. Still, though Amal saw a period of resurgence during the Lebanese civil war their inability to consolidate their leadership and political focus led to demands for an alternative representative organization for the Shi'a in Lebanon, demands that would be fulfilled by the formation of Hezbollah.

Prior to Hezbollah's official formation in 1985 a number of smaller Islamist-oriented groups, independent activists, Islamic clerics, and former leaders and officials

¹¹⁷ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 31.

¹¹⁸ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 29.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

who had left Amal, joined ranks to establish Hezbollah as a unified Islamist movement.¹²⁰ Hezbollah lacked the kind of institutional structure and depth (discussed at length in chapter 5) in their formative years that would characterize it later on. The founders were a collection of activists who had been involved in secular and sectarian politics in the previous generation. These men were unified in that they were young, revolutionary, Islamist-oriented, and committed to overthrowing Israeli occupation.¹²¹ They were the alternative representation for the Shi'a population in Lebanon to Amal, rejecting compromise with the Lebanese political system they blamed for Shi'a exclusion in the first place. Combined with demands of the Shi'a population for a response to Israeli aggression and occupation, the creation of Hezbollah, or a group with a similar focus and structure to it, was inevitable.

3.4 Hezbollah and Amal

It was during this period that Hezbollah moved aggressively to strike at Westerners in Lebanon and at Western influence, promoting increased violent resistance in the region. Groups linked to Hezbollah, if not directly controlled by the party, kidnapped dozens of foreigners and held them hostage for as long as seven years (as was the case of American journalist Terry Anderson).¹²² This was predated by the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983, an attack that Hezbollah has often been

¹²⁰ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 31.

¹²¹ Ibid., 32.

¹²² Norton, *Hezbollah*, 41.

linked to by Western security agencies but that the organization has never explicitly taken credit for.¹²³ Regardless of their participation in the Embassy bombing, two things are undoubtedly clear about the period from 1981 to Hezbollah's official formation in 1985. First, violent attacks against Western representatives, including bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations, saw a marked increase.¹²⁴ Second, Hezbollah was without question linked to these resistance and anti-Western violent attacks.¹²⁵ While many scholars are quick to point towards Iranian influences for the attacks, there are instances where Hezbollah's role is clearly indicated. Hezbollah's early hard-nosed stance in support of resistance activity increased tension with Western powers, specifically Israel and the United States, but equally importantly promoted violent resistance in the Shi'a population who sought a pro-active alternative to *Amal*.

While some of the more destructive attacks in Lebanon during this period are debatably connected to Hezbollah, the evidence most often draws conclusive links to Iran rather than Hezbollah, there is no question about Hezbollah's participation in the skyjacking of TWA flight 847 from Rome to Beirut. The June 1985 hijacking saw 147 passengers taken hostage by two Hezbollah operatives when the plane was diverted from its destination of Rome, Italy, to Beirut, Lebanon.¹²⁶ The hostage situation was

¹²³ Ibid., 78.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 79.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 42.

intended to highlight the fate of 766 Lebanese prisoners held in Israel. The hijackers argued these prisoners were suffering in extremely difficult conditions and had no recourse to the protections of international law.¹²⁷ The hijacking led to increased international attention to the regional conflict, but more importantly it exposed the deep tensions between Hezbollah and Amal. When Nabih Berri, then leader of *Amal*, attempted to mediate the crisis, Hezbollah heatedly objected that Berri had no authority to speak on their behalf or on behalf of the Shi'a in Lebanon.¹²⁸

The hijacking, and subsequent fiery public rejection of Nabih Berri as mediator, was a clear exposition of the animosity between Hezbollah and Amal.¹²⁹ The hostage situation ended only after Israel quietly agreed to release their Lebanese prisoners from the Atlit prison and at the intervention of both Syria and Iranian Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani pressured the perpetrators to bring the conflict to an end.¹³⁰ The underlying discord between Hezbollah and Amal, however, increased continually until it finally exploded in 1988-89, with the two belligerent militias contending for the territory of Beirut and the South and the support of more than half the Shi'a population that resided there.¹³¹ The catalyst to the fighting was the kidnapping of U.S. marine Lt. Colonel William R. Higgins who was serving with the United Nations forces in the

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

south. The operation was carried out by the “Believers Resistance”, a group sympathetic to Hezbollah, and had serious implications for both Amal’s relationship with the United Nations forces in the country and with Hezbollah directly.¹³²

The Higgins kidnapping directly threatened Amal’s strategy of maintaining a cooperative working relationship with the UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) and they reacted by attempting to find Higgins and free him.¹³³ The kidnappers were able to evade Amal operatives and would eventually murder Higgins, but not before the incident triggered serious violent engagements between the two groups. The violence intensified until the fall of 1988 when fighting erupted in the southern suburbs of Beirut and virtually Amal’s entire military foothold in the capital was destroyed.¹³⁴ Hezbollah’s efforts to roll back Amal’s influence in the South were clear signs of their early commitment to become the indisputable representative of the Shi’a in Lebanon.¹³⁵ By 1989, Hezbollah had succeeded in eroding Amal’s position in southern Lebanon and was poised to capitalize on the shifting regional political landscape that occurred when the civil war ended later that year.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Qassem, *Hizballah*, 102.

3.5 Conclusion

The influence of Lebanon's sectarian political institutions on the agency of Lebanese individuals is one that necessitates that political expression be articulated through sectarian identities. This is a direct result of how the Ottoman Empire and French authorities attempted to create a system that would manage the cultural and ideological pluralities that existed in the region. The Lebanese political system prohibits strong cross-communal or national authority because it is based on a system of allocation rather than participation. Politics in Lebanon is assumed to be about struggle for communal shares of power, not in the equal participation in the administration and governance of the country. This type of system perpetuates the creation of privileged groups and social exclusion. Institutional expansion throughout the 1900s necessitated the development of political parties in Lebanon that could mobilize communal members, articulate communal interests, and provide individuals to take positions in the expanding state apparatus.¹³⁶ This institutional change was coupled with political and economic changes in the region. The complex interplay of these mercurial forces shaped how different groups acquired authority and legitimacy during the time period. Naturally, this makes it the perfect environment for the creation of resistance organizations such as Hezbollah. As a strong representative of the Shi'a sect in Lebanon,

¹³⁶ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 36.

it functions as a quasi-mediator between the interests and demands of that sect and the Lebanese state. In this sense, Hezbollah is a political party grounded in the practices and political logics of all political parties in Lebanon, and the majority of political parties globally.

Chapter 4: Resistance Identity and Ideology

In 1985, in the middle of the Lebanese civil war and after the occupation of Southern Lebanon by Israeli forces, Hezbollah announced their existence to the world and declared their ideology and goals through the Open Letter. Hezbollah's ideology and core principles are rooted in their religious beliefs, and, as such, these have remained constant throughout their political and organizational development. At the same time, the organization has created a level of flexibility in their ideology that allows them to adapt their discourse to the changing security and political environment. Recognizing their ideological flexibility allows us to understand how Hezbollah responds to instrumental and organizational problems moving forward. From an instrumental standpoint, Hezbollah's ideology will determine the importance of variables in their cost vs. benefit analysis. The influence of ideology on the organizational view determines the types of incentives that will be offered to the members of the organization and the direction the leadership must adopt. While the previous chapter focused on analyzing the conditions that allowed Hezbollah to emerge in Lebanon, this chapter turns its attention to how Hezbollah established their ideology and created their unique identity in the Lebanese community.

A comprehensive look at Hezbollah's ideology directly relates to my thesis question in several important ways. First and foremost, the role of ideology is important

insofar as it frames the group's worldview and determines their core objectives while simultaneously establishing the framework for the group's strategy to achieve these objectives. Furthermore, the group's ideology determines the identification of the enemy and the acceptable methods the organization will use to attempt to defeat them. Last, Hezbollah's ideology creates a unique resistance identity derived from a complex interplay of notions and interpretations derived from Shi'a law, Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of the *wilayat al-faqih* (rule of the jurist), Shi'a history and religious and cultural beliefs that render resistance a religious obligation for all Muslims. Explaining Hezbollah's ideology and definition of resistance is important to my thesis because it shows how the parameters of their belief system allows room for the organization to make the transition from violent to non-violent forms of political expression in the first place. This chapter will focus on establishing the basis for Hezbollah's ideological thought, unpacking the core tenets of their belief system, and explaining the subsequent formation of the organization's identity *vis-à-vis* their line of reasoning.

4.1 The Islamic Resurgence and Iranian Revolution

In the 1970s the Middle Eastern Muslim community faced a number of interrelated crises in succession. Secularism, government nepotism and corruption, economic mismanagement and inequalities, and the uneven manifestation of modernization all contributed to the turmoil in the region that saw multiple

governments face revolutionary resistance.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the political and religious backlash towards various Middle Eastern government's inability to eliminate Israel, considered an illegal occupier of holy Muslim lands by the majority of Arab peoples, and the increasing influence of western imperialist powers produced significant anxiety in the Muslim population in the region.¹³⁸ The governments of Egypt, Syria, and Iran all found themselves attempting to suppress the factious demands of their citizens who desired an alternative method of governance, one that many believed could be derived from Islam.

Historically, peoples are inclined to turn to religion during times of crisis.¹³⁹ The appeal of Islamic governance was similar to that of Christianity in the New World. It offered solid community attachments, a network of existing religious and charitable institutions capable of meeting the spiritual and material needs of the population, and offered an existing moral ideology usable by individuals and communities to reinforce their identity. Religion, however, is open to interpretation and so the Islamic revival was pursued in various ways across the region based on the interpretations of religious leaders. For the purpose of this thesis it's important to emphasize that the fundamentalist groups, who exhibited extreme reactions and urged radical Islamic

¹³⁷ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2004), 9.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Fazlar Tahman, "Islam: Challenges and Opportunities", in Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachin, *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), 318-323.

revolution, were in the minority. The general population was far more inclined to a moderate approach that involved using Islamic scripture to justify working within non-Islamic governments to promote reform rather than undertaking *jihad* to overthrow them.¹⁴⁰ That said the discourse was not whether an Islamic approach to government and community was necessary, rather only the approach on how it should be established.

Regional clashes between fundamentalist and moderate interpretations were frequent during this period, notably in Egypt and Syria, with moderates coming out on top. The exception is Iran, who underwent a conflict of secularism similar to Syria's, but in Iran it was the fundamentalists that triumphed and established an Islamic Republic in 1979. The close relationship the Shah maintained with the United States fueled resentment within the religious leaders in Iran, who viewed the country's growing dependency on the United States, and the influence of America's secular culture on Iranian society, with disdain.¹⁴¹ This coupled with the Shah's efforts to modernize Iran in ways promoted by the US represented a serious threat to not only the Islamic institutions in the country, but also to the authority of the Shi'a clergy in Iran.¹⁴² Naturally, this led to resistance by Shi'a clergy and specifically was the catalyst to

¹⁴⁰ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 9.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who played the leading role in mobilizing the eventual Islamic Revolution.

Khomeini would fully consolidate his authority in Iran with help of the Revolutionary Guards, an officially recognized standing militia in Iran, and then take the necessary steps to establish an Islamic Republic where he became the all-wise Supreme Jurist.¹⁴³ Henceforth, Iran has been governed in accordance with *sharia* (religious) law, as interpreted by the Supreme Jurist in consultation with his Islamic clergy, who are key members of Iran's governing institutions. The successful revolution in Iran, and Khomeini's consolidation of power, would serve as proof that the Islamic ideal could be realized for Hezbollah and various other Islamic resistance groups in the region.

The lessons of the Islamic Revolution flowed throughout the region, especially in the Gulf States, West Bank, and Gaza, but it had its most profound impact on the young revolutionaries who formed Hezbollah, who identify with the Revolution's ideology, and embrace the principle of government by the Supreme Jurist.¹⁴⁴ The use of the Revolutionary Guard in Iran and concurrent belief that armed struggle is not only justified but a sacred imperative opened Hezbollah to practices that were traditionally

¹⁴³ Ibid., 16.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

rejected by Shi'a leaders over the centuries in favour of passive forms of political expression.¹⁴⁵

Hezbollah's version of fundamentalism embraces the core principles of Iran's Islamic ideology; the importance of struggling against secularism, injustice, and the oppression of Muslims by foreign imperialists and their regional proxy, Israel. Their vision of creating an expansive Islamic community follows Ayatollah Khomeini's goal of exporting the Islamic Revolution throughout the region. Hezbollah's leaders connect Khomeini's ideology to their own while using it as a way to legitimize their resistance to the Israeli occupation.

4.2 The Open Letter (Oppressed vs Oppressor)

The first declaration of principles and foundational document of Hezbollah was published on February 16, 1985, in the midst of both the Lebanese civil war and the Israeli intervention in the country. The document reflected a Manichaeian view of the world divided between the forces of evil, the oppressors, and the forces of good, the Party of God.¹⁴⁶ The Open Letter, released after Israel's partial flight from Lebanon in 1985, was the initial solidification of Hezbollah's political vision.¹⁴⁷ This publication had far reaching implications for Hezbollah, transforming them from a secret resistance

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Joshua L. Gleis and Benedetta Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 51.

¹⁴⁷ Qassem, *Hizbullah*, 98.

enterprise free from political and media interactions into a publicly recognized political party. By no means did this signal the end of Hezbollah's military resistance in southern Lebanon. In fact, after the ideological declarations in the Open Letter were made public there was a marked increase in distinguished resistance operations.¹⁴⁸ The TWA hijacking and Higgins kidnapping discussed in Chapter 3 are examples that can be definitively attributed to Hezbollah during this period. It is argued by U.S. intelligence agencies, however, that Hezbollah was directly responsible for some of the most destructive suicide bombings of the era before the attacks on the World Trade Center in September of 2011.¹⁴⁹ These include several suicide bombings in 1983, one where a TNT laden truck was driven into the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut and killed 241 Americans, and another on the same day where 58 French paratroopers were killed.¹⁵⁰ Last, the suicide bombing of the American embassy in Beirut has been widely argued to have been perpetrated by Hezbollah.¹⁵¹ These incidents were only a part of Hezbollah's operations as the organization continued to conduct kidnappings and hijackings of foreigners within Lebanon. Still, the Open Letter was important to Hezbollah as it established several fundamental tenets that are central to their strategy today. These include the establishment of an Islamic state, resistance to the Zionists, pan-Islamism,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Gleis and Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study*, 84.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Hezbollah maintains that it was not involved in any of the aforementioned incidents.

anti-imperialism, and the fulfillment of jihad.¹⁵² While these specific ideological declarations can help us understand Hezbollah's style and trajectory of political expression from 1985 to the elections in 1992, first it is important to explore the focal method of reasoning that influences Hezbollah's worldview and shapes their actions and organization structure: the relationship between the Oppressor and the Oppressed.

Central to Hezbollah's notion of political action is the division of the world, formulated by Ayatollah Khomeini, into *mustakbirin* (oppressors) and *mustad'afin* (oppressed).¹⁵³ This conceptual dichotomy is so important to Hezbollah's ideology that it is invoked in almost every official's public address. Furthermore, both the Open Letter of 1985 and Hezbollah's 1992 electoral programme are addressed to the oppressed, demonstrating that regardless of how the organization is pursuing their political ends that they have a clear understanding of who they assume their target constituency to be. More than just Shi'a Muslims in Lebanon, Hezbollah suggests that the oppressed are a global population of those suffering cultural, political, economic, and social degradation at the hands of the oppressors.

Although Hezbollah seems to employ an exclusivist discourse in which it classifies people according to the Qu'ranic dichotomy of Hezbollah (The Party of God)

¹⁵² Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 13-59.

¹⁵³ Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 16.

and *Hizb al-Shaytan* (The Party of the Devil), the group in fact uses the Islamic expression of oppressed and reproduces it as an all-inclusive concept in order to uphold political and social justice.¹⁵⁴ In the Open Letter they write:

“our friends carry ideas that do not conform to Islam... but this does not preclude cooperation with you in order to achieve these goals... especially since we feel that the motives which exhort you to struggle are Muslim motives in the first place, originating from confronting oppression and tyranny that have been practiced and imposed upon you...”¹⁵⁵

The definition of oppressed for Hezbollah is different from that of Khomeini in its focus on a Marxist style terminology that is then filtered through an Islamic interpretation of economic, political, and social justice. The end result can be described as a kind of Islamic socialism, one that focuses on the well-being of all oppressed people.

Hezbollah clearly articulates in the Open Letter and their other political declarations that they seek to represent and ally themselves with oppressed people throughout the entire world, irrespective of their color, race, or religion.¹⁵⁶ The party interprets and applies the contemporary concept of *mustad'afin* by stressing that it is a Qu'ranic concept based in the advent of the Islamic Revolution.¹⁵⁷ They argue their usage of the concept is in conformity with the party's identity as an Islamic *jihadi* movement struggling to address and redress the injustices suffered by the oppressed.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 156.

¹⁵⁵ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 44.

¹⁵⁶ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction*, 156.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

This, according to Hezbollah, is different than the political usage found in contemporary socialist or Marxist theories that refer to the proletariat.¹⁵⁸ Hezbollah emphasizes that *mustad'afin* applies to the wronged, unjustly treated, tyrannized, and impoverished who do not own their daily bread, and who are oppressed in their freedom, dignity, and endeavours without any consideration whether they are Christians, Muslims, or otherwise.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, Hezbollah's political ideology stresses the universality of the Qu'ranic concept, instead of the specificity of its Marxist counterpoint, one that cuts across class, cultural, and religious cleavages.

Hezbollah specifically mentions the homeless in Lebanon and refers to Shi'a southerners when describing the oppressed. This would seem to contradict the distinction between Qu'ranic and Marxist definitions.¹⁶⁰ The important distinction, however, is that the classification of Shi'a in Lebanon as oppressed does not stem from the Qu'ran but from the Israeli occupation and the socio-economic inequalities typifying Lebanese society described in the previous chapter. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Shi'a in Lebanon developed a community as a result of the formation of sectarian institutions, consistent government under representation, and socio-economic inequalities in the country. Therefore, Hezbollah's designation of the Shi'a in Lebanon as oppressed emanates from a class analysis perspective as opposed to an Islamic one.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Saad, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, 19.

Accordingly, economic status alone is insufficient criterion for Hezbollah's definition of the oppressed. Poverty, while a common characteristic, is less determinate than deprivation and exploitation.¹⁶¹ Only when poverty is the result of state discrimination, negligence, and abuse is it synonymous with Hezbollah's definition of oppression. Furthermore, deprivation and exploitation extend beyond mere economic definitions. The incorporation of all social classes into the definition is based on the Qu'ranic portrayal of the oppressed as those who are economically, but also, politically, or culturally weak vis-à-vis the oppressors.¹⁶² This serves to reinforce the universality of the definition, encompassing all social classes and religious denominations.

Unlike many Islamic fundamentalist groups who deem those Muslims who do not subscribe to their Islamic vision as infidels, and who view secularist Muslims as apostates who ought to be punished by death, Hezbollah has no such discourse that declares the infidelity of adversaries.¹⁶³ Hezbollah articulates very clearly that only the oppressors are denounced, regardless of religious identities and political leanings. Also, secularism is not denounced by the party by default. Only those who "do not uphold

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 20.

your covenants with the Muslims and engage in aggression against them”¹⁶⁴ or enforce secularism as a state religion are considered oppressors.

The history of Lebanon’s sectarian system was discussed at length in the previous chapter, but here its relationship to Hezbollah can be better investigated. Initially, Hezbollah firmly rejected any notions of participation in Lebanese political institutions. This does not suggest, however, that Hezbollah is necessarily either an expression of this secular political history or a rejection of it. Rather, Lebanon’s political history was a catalyst to creating the necessary social support that encouraged Hezbollah’s creation. Hezbollah’s rejection of the Lebanese political system is also seemingly derived more so from their definitions of oppressor and oppressed than it is a rejection of secular forms of government. They instead rejected the Lebanese system because it was forced onto the oppressed in Lebanon by colonial rulers and marginalized their rights as Shi’a Muslims. Ultimately, this suggests that even early on the organization considered participation in the Lebanese political system a potentially sufficient mechanism for Hezbollah’s political expression if its oppressive nature can be addressed.

The distinction between Islamic, Marxist, and Hezbollah’s definition of oppression is important because it demonstrates an early indication of possible

¹⁶⁴ Hezbollah, “Open Letter Addressed to the Oppressed in Lebanon and the World, 16 February 1985”, *Hizbullah’s Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*. Joseph Alagha, 47.

reconciliation between the organization and the political system in Lebanon. That said the possibility for political reconciliation does not extend to those Hezbollah defines as the oppressors. Ultimately, the West and those who identify with the West are deemed oppressors. The fact that they generally belong to the upper classes of society is coincidental, as is their religious identity. Specifically, it is the attitude of Zionism and the West, in particular that of the United States, that differentiates the oppressors from the politically and culturally oppressed. The occupation of southern Lebanon by Israel renders the Israeli government the ultimate oppressor outside of the United States.¹⁶⁵ The definition also extends to the “various occupiers of the lands of the oppressed” and to the “tyrannical regimes governing the oppressed whose subservience to the West, in addition to their inherent injustice as dictatorships, translates into oppression”.¹⁶⁶ This was explicitly stated through the denouncement and condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, historic colonial interventions, and crimes perpetrated by America in Vietnam, Iran, Nicaragua, Granada, Palestine, and Lebanon.¹⁶⁷ Specifically Hezbollah names their major foes as “Israel, America, France, and the Phalangists”.¹⁶⁸ It is against these enemies that Hezbollah urges their “oppressed friends” to form a common identity of resistance to oppression and to strive for the unity of humanity.

¹⁶⁵ Saad, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, 21.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Hezbollah, *Open Letter Addressed to the Oppressed*, 47.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

4.3 Hezbollah's Resistance Identity

The global relationship between the oppressors and oppressed in Hezbollah's ideology is the most influential factor shaping the organization's goals, structure, and world view. The dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed relates directly to what Manuel Castells theorizes as a "resistance identity".¹⁶⁹ According to Castells, resistance identity is "generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devaluated and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society".¹⁷⁰ Though this seems to explain Hezbollah's identity and ideological perspective, the second part of resistance identity theory pertains directly to the overall goal of this thesis. Castells' suggests these identities resist and hardly ever communicate with the state, except to struggle, negotiate, and bargain on behalf of their specific interests and values, so as to acquire vital services and resources for their constituencies.¹⁷¹ While this is true of Hezbollah in its early formative stages, we know that the organization made a marked transition from focusing on violent political expression and resistance to an inclusionary method that involved acting within Lebanese institutions in order to address their political and resistance concerns. Though

¹⁶⁹ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture Volume II*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998), 6.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

the resistance identity directly relates to the question of oppression and resistance that is central to Hezbollah's world view, which in turn influences both the organization's goals and structure, its insufficient on its own to describe how groups might transition away from exclusionary and confrontational ideological criteria.

Castells' explanation of the development of a resistance identity for organizations applies to Hezbollah's formation but not to how they transitioned non-violent forms of political expression. Castells argues that those groups who are capable of "building a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure" have developed a project identity.¹⁷² There is nothing to suggest that identities that begin as resistance cannot mature into projects. Similarly, neither identity has progressive or regressive value outside its historical context.¹⁷³ Most importantly, however, is that how, and by whom, different types of identities are constructed, and with what outcomes, is a matter of social context.¹⁷⁴ This reinforces the need for combining both the instrumental and organizational approaches explained in chapter two when analyzing not only how Hezbollah originally formed, but societal and group factors at play during the course of the organization's transformation. The rest of this chapter is devoted to exploring the

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

basis for Hezbollah's ideological beliefs in their formative years and the influence of these beliefs on the organization's ability to transform themselves politically.

The resistance agenda is at the core of Hezbollah's *raison d'être* with respect to Israel, the United States, and its allies. In this sense, the group thrives on conflict, and they need an ongoing confrontation with these clearly defined enemies to maintain both external legitimacy and a wide supportive base both in Lebanon and abroad. However, there is nothing that suggests that their resistance identity necessitates that the organization uses violence to address these conflicts. As discussed later in the chapter, Hezbollah employs a narrative that focuses on fundamental principles of Islamic beliefs that can be pursued by individuals in both violent and non-violent capacities.

While the Qu'ranic influence on Hezbollah is intricately woven into their political ideology, the organization simplifies their ideological narrative by framing it in the context of good against evil. They accomplish this by employing a distinct division of the world into mutually exclusive groups, the oppressors and the oppressed. The unequal power dynamic that exists between these two groups places Hezbollah in a constant struggle. While this creates a distinct resistance identity the group uses to influence their choice of goals and the organization's structure, it does not necessarily mean that the goals of the group, or the means they use to pursue these goals, will be static or violent. In fact, by creating a definition of the oppressed that encompasses the

majority of people worldwide, Hezbollah creates a certain ideological flexibility that can be applied to how they choose their goals and in the methods they employ to pursue them.

4.4 Hezbollah's stated goals moving forward

The clearest indication of the organization's prioritisation of their resistance ideology lies in its goals explicitly stated in the Open Letter. Throughout its history Hezbollah has continuously striven to show that the attainment of political power is secondary to its goal of liberating the occupied zone. The organization's goals fall under three main categories. The organization's primary goal is resistance to the Israeli occupation in Lebanon. This includes a broad anti-imperialist agenda aimed at those that support the Israeli occupation and help make it possible. Their second goal is the creation of an Islamic state in Lebanon. Drawing on the Iranian Revolution as inspiration Hezbollah looks to reshape political institutions in Lebanon with an Islamic influence. Last is the organization's pursuit of *jihad*. Hezbollah emphasizes their specific goals with an inclusionary vision of *jihad* that the organization applies to all Muslims globally. In structuring their ideology and specific goals in this way, Hezbollah prioritized a resistance agenda over secondary goals that pertained to influencing state political institutions in Lebanon while simultaneously allowing interested individuals to be included in the organization's ambitions by non-violent means.

The Israeli occupation of South Lebanon discussed in the previous chapter was the catalyst to the creation of Hezbollah. It is no surprise then that Hezbollah has consistently upheld the conviction that Israel represents the ultimate oppressor and therefore perceives its resistance to the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory its most important goal.¹⁷⁵ A sustained military campaign against a regional superpower like Israel, however, requires considerable planning, funding, and logistics. This, combined with Hezbollah's irreconcilable stance towards Israel, creates an environment of continuous conflict that reinforces the organization's resistance ideology and *raison d'être*.

Central to Hezbollah's political ideology is their anti-Zionist rhetoric that often conflates Jewish identity with Zionist ideology, thus equating Jews with Zionists.¹⁷⁶ In the Open Letter and their political declarations since 1985, Hezbollah clearly states that they equate all Israelis occupying Palestinian and Lebanese territory with Zionists.¹⁷⁷ Their advocacy for the destruction of Israel is based on Hezbollah's ideological understanding that current Israeli territory is an illegal occupation by Zionists. Joseph Alagha writes that "Hezbollah characterizes Israel as an aggressive, racist, expansionist, anti-humanist, cancerous gland instated by Western colonial powers in the Muslim

¹⁷⁵ Saad, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, 113.

¹⁷⁶ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 19.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Heartland".¹⁷⁸ However, Hezbollah clarifies that they do not discriminate against the Jews as a race or religion and that they would accord them their human and civil rights regardless of their constant conflict. This distinction between Jews living in Muslim countries and Muslim rule and the "Zionists" in Israel closely resembles the stance of Khomeini's.¹⁷⁹ Simply stated then, in the eyes of the organization there are no Jews living in Israel, only Zionists. Furthermore, Hezbollah views the occupation of Palestine by Israel in the same way it views its occupation of Lebanese territory, coupling their domestic resistance to a continual regional commitment to the liberation of Palestine. This rhetoric has forced Hezbollah into a prolonged conflict with the significantly stronger Israeli government to the south, further reinforcing their resistance agenda.

The common ground individuals can find with one another in Hezbollah's resistance to Israel exists in the extension of their ideology to those oppressed globally by imperialist entities. Due to the deep religious underpinnings of the group, Hezbollah emphasizes that they are exercising their legitimate license to defend the rights and dignity of the *umma* (global Muslim community) by confronting their basic enemies; the US, France, and Israel.¹⁸⁰ It is important to note that according to Hezbollah the basis for this conflict is derived from what *Jalal Al-e-Ahmad* classified as "Westoxification" and

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 21.

not xenophobia.¹⁸¹ Rather than antipathy to the West and East, “Westoxification” is defined by an overbearing cultural “disease spreading in an environment rendered susceptible to it” by materialist powers.¹⁸² These materialist powers affect all people globally, regardless of their ideological and religious underpinnings. Thus, the anti-imperialist sentiment of Hezbollah is deeply rooted in their hatred for those they consider to be the perpetrators of the “Westoxification”, the corporate and government administrations, and not the individual citizens of western nations themselves whom they see as oppressed. Hezbollah uses this to claim an ideological superiority over the West and to justify their Islamic response to the materialism and rationalism found in Western culture: *jihad*. By building holistic-coalescent individuals, Hezbollah purports that the project of the Islamic Revolution does not aim at “modernizing Islam”, but instead seeks to “Islamize modernity”.¹⁸³ The organization firmly believes this Islamic response poses a threat to Western rationalism and materialism and is irreconcilable.

As its primary focus, resisting Israeli and imperialist powers also became the essential area in which Hezbollah would invest its resources and significantly influence how the group would structure itself. From a principal and doctrinal perspective, Hezbollah’s political ideology aims to establish Muslim rights in Lebanon free from Israeli and Western influences. Furthermore, they aim to restore Muslim historical

¹⁸¹ Jalal Al-e-Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1984), 13.

¹⁸² Ibid., 29.

¹⁸³ Alagha, *Hizbullah’s Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 21.

rights in Palestine and therefore are completely against any ceasefire, truce, land for peace, peace negotiations, or normalization of relations with Israel and Israeli supporters in the region.¹⁸⁴

One of the pillars of Hezbollah's early intellectual structure is the Islamic state ideal. In contrast to their foreign policy, which has been extremely consistent throughout the organization's history, Hezbollah's view of its role in Lebanon has shifted dramatically since their original conception. In the 1985 Open Letter, Hezbollah called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon and rejected the possibility of participating in what it saw as the inherently corrupt existing political system in the country.¹⁸⁵ Hezbollah stresses in their political ideology that while they reject the sectarian-confessional political system in Lebanon, they would not attempt to impose an Islamic state by force, rather they would only construct it if the majority of the Lebanese population demanded and consented to it, including the Christian population. Heavily influenced by Khomeini's teachings and the Iranian Revolution, the organization believed the Lebanese Islamic state would be modeled after Iran and be the first step toward establishing a larger, pan-Islamic state that would unite all Muslims in the region.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 48-49.

¹⁸⁵ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 37-40.

¹⁸⁶ Gleis and Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study*, 57.

The Open Letter classifies Hezbollah as a social movement that calls for the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon modeled on Iran's Islamic Republic.¹⁸⁷ The declaration does not plainly specify the political-ideological content of the Islamic order; it only refers to the Islamic state as an ideological doctrine, political order, and mode of governance.¹⁸⁸ It does, however, suggest that the foundation for the Islamic order is derived from the practical application of the *shari'a* and divine injunctions.¹⁸⁹ They stress that the common ground between *ahl al-dhimma*, or non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state, and Muslims is respecting social values of mutual tolerance, respect, brotherhood, and solidarity. On this basis, Hezbollah accords the Christians in Lebanon their social and religious freedoms, but not political freedom. This is significant because it defines who Hezbollah is willing to participate with, and in what political capacity, in both domestic and international realms of governance.

Hezbollah's early desire to create an Islamic state was not confined to regional issues. A core tenet to their belief system is heeding the call of Khomeini's call for pan-Islamism to avoid the "dangers of discord".¹⁹⁰ This directive has become especially important in the wake of what Khomeini termed the "worldwide conspiracy against the

¹⁸⁷ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Saad, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, 69.

unity of Muslims”.¹⁹¹ Used in conjunction with Hezbollah’s ideology of oppressor against oppressed, section 22 of the Open Letter advocates pan-Islamism and warns against following Muslim religious scholars who apply the “imperialist colonizers precept of divide and conquer”.¹⁹² Thus, any political or military dispute between Sunni and Shi’a groups is considered by Hezbollah to be an oppressor-colonizer’s conspiracy aimed at spreading discord and dissension among the Muslim population. By adopting this ideological stance, Hezbollah not only aims at discrediting Muslim scholars who would oppose their ideological views, but is also attempting to appeal to the substantial Sunni and Shi’a populations in Lebanon and to Muslims on a global scale.

The vision of an Islamic state in Lebanon, and a pan-Islamic state in the region, governs a substantial amount of Hezbollah’s rhetoric and, in their view, applies to all Muslims worldwide. Hezbollah is careful not to use specific examples of Sunni-Shi’a disagreements because this would inevitably lead to discord and be counterproductive to the organization’s goal of uniting all Muslims under their ideology. Also, it is important to remember that Hezbollah espoused these ideological beliefs at the height of the civil war in Lebanon. The Muslim population in Lebanon is a significant majority compared to other groups and if unified could have substantial influence on how the country’s institutions would be shaped following the civil war. Similar to their

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Alagha, *Hizbullah’s Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 20.

discourse of oppressor and oppressed, Hezbollah promotes an inclusionary vision of the Islamic state, both in Lebanon and abroad, that emphasizes common ideological-political dimensions that apply to all Muslims.

Derived from the Arabic verb *jahada* (which means to endeavour, strive, or struggle), the Qu'ranic concept of *jihad* is used to describe any activity that strives in the cause of God and Islam through either individual or communal basis.¹⁹³ Hezbollah employs a specific definition whereby “any act which exerts effort in God’s cause is *jihad*”. In this respect, however, they do not mean God’s personal cause, but rather the cause of mankind.¹⁹⁴ The cause of mankind is “the cause of the people, the cause of the oppressed, the cause of pride, honour, and glory... the cause of defense of the land, the cause of the defense of religion and of values of humanity”.¹⁹⁵ This definition of *jihad* works in conjunction with Hezbollah’s resistance identity and is considered a defensive activity, as opposed to an offensive one. In the same vein as Hezbollah’s political ideology concerning the oppressed, the organization’s view of *jihad* is one that is inclusionary beyond simply violent means of action. This is demonstrated by their distinction between lesser and greater *jihad* and how they apply this definition of martyrdom.

¹⁹³ Saad, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, 122.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. (Taken from the Nasru'llah, Ashura Speech, 12 May 1997)

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (London: Fourth Estate Ltd, 1997), 87.

There are two distinct forms of *jihad* that are promoted by Hezbollah. The first is *lesser jihad*, or the defensive military action in the battlefield against the enemies of Islam.¹⁹⁶ The second is *greater jihad*, or the internal struggle individuals face within themselves.¹⁹⁷ Combined, these two definitions encompass almost any effort that is exerted in defense of Hezbollah's resistance goals as a form of *jihad*. Similarly, any death that results from an individual's conviction to these efforts can be depicted as an instance of martyrdom. Hezbollah appeals to individuals by showing their struggle to be closely related to important Islamic concepts that influence communal identities in Lebanon. The subtext is that Muslims may pursue martyrdom without engaging in a military *jihad*, and that *jihad* itself is not confined to military activity. The composition of Hezbollah's definitions and concepts are designed to be used in a manner that applies to every Muslim.

The ideological-political dimension of *greater jihad* is emphasized through any level of engagement with Hezbollah's activities.¹⁹⁸ Thus, Hezbollah appeals to an individual's concept of identity by suggesting mere membership and participation in any capacity will fulfill their political responsibility. Of the two, *greater jihad* is considered by Hezbollah to be more important because success in *lesser jihad* is contingent on success in the greater. Only after an individual is successful in the

¹⁹⁶ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 21.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

struggle with their desires will they be capable of confronting the enemy.¹⁹⁹ This works to reinforce the concept of struggle in Hezbollah's resistance identity, both with oneself and with the enemy, and serves as a method of reinforcing a distinct Islamic identity within the group and its membership.

Though *lesser jihad* is relegated to a secondary role in Hezbollah's political rhetoric, it is the focal point of many of its operations and how the organization is structured. The party construes oppression in a way that equates non-resistance through *jihad* to death.²⁰⁰ Muslims that refuse to embark on a *jihad* are not only considered to be dead in this life, but are marred by "disgrace, shame, and degradation" in the afterlife as well.²⁰¹ According to this logic, "an honourable death" is decidedly "preferable to a humiliating life", and therefore that the true meaning of life lies in resistance and martyrdom.²⁰²

Through this understanding of resistance, rejection of humiliation, and *jihad*, Hezbollah insists that its resistance to Israel's occupation of South Lebanon is not only a "sacred right" that may be relinquished, but also a "religious legal obligation" that cannot. This obligation is binding for all believers, even if Israel does not fire a single bullet, because their very occupation is an act of aggression and a form of subjugation –

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Saad, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, 224.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 125.

²⁰² Ibid.

both of which necessitate Muslims to respond via defensive *jihad*.²⁰³ By combining *greater* and *lesser jihad* with their resistance identity it appeals directly to individuals in the Muslim community. Hezbollah insists all Muslims are called to *jihad*, regardless of whether they partake through violent resistance activity or not. The organization attempts to implicate the entire population in their obligatory notion of resistance, one they perceive to be grounded in an individual's "humanitarian" and "moral" duty. Nonetheless, the group states that "our religious ideology is the first of [our] conditions", affirming their religious underpinnings and the Islamic character of Hezbollah's resistance.

4.5 Conclusion

The resistance identity is so integral to Hezbollah's political ideology that both the military and political wings of the organization are identified in synch with each other. Husayn Al-Musawi, a founding member of Amal and Hezbollah, would go as far as to state that "The Resistance is Hezbollah and Hezbollah is the Resistance".²⁰⁴ All members of Hezbollah's political and social institutions are considered a part of the Resistance, all Resistance fighters are considered part of Hezbollah. Everything about the group is filtered through its ideological understanding of *jihad* and the resistance

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 116.

relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed of the world.²⁰⁵ Accordingly, much of Hezbollah's political thought focuses on the religious and moral bases for political accommodation and political violence in non-Islamic states.

The relationship between Hezbollah's ideology and the organization's goals, however, has shown a certain degree of flexibility. They have structured their worldview in such a way that while Israel still occupies parts of Southern Lebanon they are affiliated with liberating the occupied zone. However, if Israel were to withdraw from the occupied zone, Hezbollah has maintained the ability to become compatible with other political goals and priorities – in particular through their relationship to the global oppressed. The organization's inclusionary approach to resistance aims to reinforce their ideology through individual and communal moral commitments and responsibilities. This creates a new understanding of resistance for Hezbollah and their supporters, one that is understood beyond the narrow confines of illegitimate violent expression outside the apparatus of the state. Instead, resistance is a process carried out by individuals and communities relating to all facets of existence. In this way Hezbollah seems to almost uniquely combine Castell's resistance and project identities by applying

²⁰⁵ Hezbollah continues to articulate their distinct versions of jihad, resistance, and martyrdom today. For a more recent analysis see: Rola el-Husseini, "Resistance, Jihad, and Martyrdom in Contemporary Lebanese Shi'a Discourse" in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 3, 399-414, (2008).

their concept of resistance to every facet of an individual's political and communal action – redefining resistance as the norm in their communal structures.

Chapter 5: Environmental and Organizational Factors

Fundamentalist and radical organizations cannot continue to operate in a totally hostile political environment. They need to secure bases of operations, freedom of movement, safe havens, financing, and an available pool from which to recruit new members. In most cases, those needs are met with the help of a segment of the general population, both at home and abroad, that either sympathizes with the organization's leadership or its political aims, identifies with its stated grievances, or is opposed to the governing authority against which the organization's efforts are aimed.²⁰⁶ In the case of Hezbollah, the Lebanese civil war and Israeli occupation had created an insecure environment with regional actors whose influence and priorities were constantly in flux. The Syrian influence on the end of the civil war, Iran's financial support for Hezbollah during the period, and the priorities of the Lebanese community all had a significant impact on how Hezbollah transformed itself from radical fundamentalist organization to mainstream political party during this period. This chapter aims to identify and examine the key environmental and organizational factors that influenced this transformation and answer the main questions set out in the first chapter of this thesis. Three main sections will be used to address the goal of the chapter. First, the instrumental approach to studying terrorism will be revisited with emphasis on the cost

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David E. Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 8-9.

vs. benefit analysis of the environmental factors affecting Hezbollah during the period. This includes their role in the Lebanese civil war, the regional influences on the war's outcome, and the effect the changing geopolitical environment had on the organization moving forward. Second, the organizational factors that played a role in consolidating the direction of the leadership and support of the membership in the face of the changing political landscape in Lebanon. Creating and reinforcing a consistent message that the majority of Lebanese citizens could identify with was central to their organizational transition. The final section will focus on what the combination of these two analytical approaches tells us about Hezbollah's political transition before the 1992 election and acknowledge the limitation of treating terrorism as an identity rather than a tactic.

5.1 External/Environment Factors

As explained in the second chapter, this thesis aims to analyze Hezbollah's political transition in Lebanon by utilizing a theoretical approach that combines the instrumental and organizational explanations as to why terrorist organizations act in the ways they do. The first of these two approaches, the instrumental approach, focuses on explaining terrorist behavior through an intentional cost versus benefit analysis conducted by the organization. The key elements to this equation are the benefits gained by the action, the costs of the attempt and of its failure, the consequences of

inaction, or the probability of success.²⁰⁷ By examining the changing conditions of Hezbollah's environment outlined below, this thesis will show that by applying a cost versus benefit analysis it can be easily understood why the organization would make the transition to non-violent political expression by participating in Lebanese parliament.

Upon its formation, Hezbollah lacked the kind of institutional depth and strength that helped them secure parliamentary seats in Lebanese elections from 1992 until the present day. As previously outlined, Hezbollah had looked towards revolutionary Iran for both material and ideological support in their early years. The end of the civil war in 1989, however, marked a clear tempering of the organization's original revolutionary zeal.²⁰⁸ Syrian influence on post-war Lebanon created a set of limitations and demands within the Lebanese political system explored below that Hezbollah was unable to ignore and would influence their transformation moving forward.

During the Lebanese civil war, multiple sectarian and political groups exercised violence against one another and against the Israeli occupation. These groups included, but were not limited to, the Phalange Party and its mainly Christian allies in the Lebanese Front (LF), the Palestinian and mainly Muslim groups allied under the

²⁰⁷ Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, 14.

²⁰⁸ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 32.

umbrella of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), the South Lebanese Army (SLA), and other Lebanese, Israeli, and Syrian militias.²⁰⁹ Important to our discussion is the relationship between the civil war and the domestic security environment where Hezbollah functioned and how the events that led to the cessation of the former heavily influenced the latter. The political reality Hezbollah faced at the conclusion of the civil war necessitated that the organization adapt to their new political environment.

Although the 1982 invasion was the catalyst to founding Hezbollah, they did not exist as a coherent organization until several years later. The Lebanese who comprised the first cadre were young, committed revolutionaries in their twenties and thirties.²¹⁰ Iran and Syria both played a large part in sponsoring, politically and monetarily, the group's early conception. The creation of Hezbollah was a realization of Iran's campaign to spread the message of their self-styled Islamic revolution.²¹¹ From Syria's standpoint, Hezbollah was an instrument to promote their regional goals: maintaining their alliance with Iran, gaining the means to strike indirectly at both Israel and the United States, and have some level of influence in Lebanese politics.²¹² Lebanese resistance continued during this period, in large part thanks to Syrian and Iranian resources.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 62.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 34.

²¹¹ Ibid., 34.

²¹² Ibid., 35.

The dynamics of Lebanon's civil war were important factors in Hezbollah's rise and its course of development. Equally important, however, was Syria's gradual political ascendancy in Lebanon and the post-war role it assumed in that country that enabled Hezbollah to create an identity as a legitimate political actor and to continue their jihad activities against Israel under the auspices of the post-war Lebanese regime.²¹³ This development legitimated the Party of God as an authentic Lebanese party and recast their struggle against the Israeli military and SLA from terrorist activity to national resistance.

Lebanon had been designated by the Syrian Assad government as an important piece of their foreign policy strategy in the early 1980s.²¹⁴ As the civil war unfolded in Lebanon, it was therefore essential that Hezbollah, who was supportive of the Iranian and Syrian positions, continued their resistance activities in the area. The desired goal was for Syrian allies to come out on top in the struggle against the Christian militias, or at least produce a military standstill, so that Damascus could translate its influence on the ground in Lebanon into an internationally accepted role to resolve the conflict. This would secure Syria's influence in the political order that emerged after the end of hostilities.²¹⁵ Syria's primary challenge with respect to promoting Hezbollah in Lebanon was in brokering a deal between Hezbollah and the government. Most importantly it

²¹³ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 43.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 44.

required that the shift in Hezbollah's political positions would receive official endorsement and further defend against regional accusations faced by the group of terrorism.²¹⁶ It was with these provisions in mind that Syria directed its efforts towards brokering an agreement that would stabilize the Lebanese political situation.

Lebanon's civil war finally came to an end after the negotiation of the *Wathiqat al-tafahum al-watani* (the Document of National understanding), more commonly referred to as the Ta'if Agreement.²¹⁷ Hoping third-party mediation might work, an Arab initiative led by Syria and supported by the international community was launched in 1989 to try and bring an end to the Lebanese civil war that had mostly reached a stalemate between the competing factions. Representatives of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, King Hassan of Morocco, and Algeria's president, Chadli Ben Jadid, mediated the negotiations that were chaired by Lakhdar Ibrahmi, the Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League.²¹⁸ Those Lebanese MP's who had been elected before the start of the civil war began, nearly 15 years earlier, assembled in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia in 1989 and formally accepted the arrangement designed to end the hostilities between the factions. This Agreement outlined the reformulation of sectarian representation and several key aspects of political reform that related to Lebanon's sovereignty and the legitimization of violence in the country.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 67.

²¹⁸ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 44.

Having ended the Lebanese civil war, the Ta'if Agreement forged a restructuring of Lebanese politics under Syrian hegemony. Though negotiations partially involved the Lebanese elites, many of its substantive elements, specifically those regarding Lebanon's foreign policy, were essentially designed and agreed upon without Lebanese consent.²¹⁹ Formal and informal negotiations were carried out amongst the major stakeholders, such as Saudi Arabia mentioned above but also with global players such as the United States, with clear indications that interpretation of the Agreement would be left to the Syrians, who had de facto control of the political system and domestic elite.²²⁰ The fact that the Agreement's interpretation and implementation was under Syria's discretion allowed them to manipulate the provisions to serve their political ends. The result involved addressing three significant problems in Lebanon related to our discussion: the need for internal institutional and administrative reform, the presence and armed capacity of the militias that had committed violence during the civil war, and the question of national identity.²²¹ The first problem was addressed by allocating an equal number of parliamentary seats and posts among Muslims and Christians in an effort to create a more balanced distribution of state power. The second, and most pertinent to our discussion, was addressed by forcing all militias, except

²¹⁹ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 67.

²²⁰ Ibid., 68.

²²¹ Kari Knio, "Lebanon: Cedar Revolution or Neo Sectarian Partition?" *Mediterranean Politics*, Volume 10, no. 2 (2005), 225-231.

Hezbollah, to disarm following the adoption of the Agreement. Lastly, the third was addressed by reaffirming the old National Pact agreement, which acknowledged the Arab identity of Lebanon and encouraged resistance to foreign interference.

During the negotiation of the Agreement, Lebanon was under direct military occupation by Israel in the predominantly Shi'a populated areas of the south. The official position outlined in the Agreement toward Israeli occupation was articulated in the general provisions designating Lebanese sovereignty, including references to the role of the army, the disarmament of militias, and the role of Syria.²²² Specifically, it advances that the state must take "all the steps necessary to liberate all Lebanese territories and to deploy the Lebanese army in the border area adjacent to Israel..." legitimizing political actors to continue violent resistance against Israeli forces occupying Lebanon.²²³ This provision provided the basis for Hezbollah to be exempted from the disarmament process in the Agreement, because they represented the only organized armed force within Lebanon that exercised violence almost exclusively against the Israeli occupation.²²⁴ This exemption was made possible because of the Syrian influence on interpreting the Ta'if Agreement and their desire to maintain support for armed struggle against Israel in Lebanese territories, creating a buffer between Syrian and Israeli conflict. This was a significant detail for Hezbollah because

²²² Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 68.

²²³ Ta'if Agreement. Accessed online: <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/lebanon/taif.htm>

²²⁴ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 69.

their resistance identity is central to their ideology and group focus. Moving forward, any scenario that forced Hezbollah to abandon their focus on Israeli resistance would have compelled the group away from accepting the Ta'if Agreement and, ultimately, away from transitioning into members of Lebanese parliament. In any cost versus benefit analysis done by the organization, a scenario where the organization had to forfeit their *raison d'être* would have been deemed unacceptable. This provision, therefore, was how the Syrians were able to engineer Hezbollah's acceptance of the Ta'if Agreement, which their leadership had initially rejected on various grounds.

Without the exemption from disarmament Hezbollah would never have accepted the provisions outlined in the Ta'if Agreement, regardless of how detrimental that decision may have been. Originally, Hezbollah rejected what they saw as a repetition of the 1943 National Pact, in so far as the Agreement did not abolish political sectarianism, or alter the structural conditions of sectarian privilege.²²⁵ The organization, however, accepted the security aspects of the Agreement because it allowed Hezbollah to remain armed while all other Lebanese militias were forced to disarm. Therefore, the Agreement served as an implicit recognition of Hezbollah's right of resistance and its monopoly on non-state violence within Lebanon. Furthermore, it meant that the Lebanese state and its various sectarian groups were effectively sanctioning Hezbollah's

²²⁵ Ibid., 33.

resistance against Israeli occupation as representative of the demands of the Lebanese people.²²⁶ The Ta'if Agreement would serve as a blueprint for a post-war Lebanese political order, one that guaranteed Hezbollah a monopoly on non-state violence and explicitly reinforced the group's resistance society ideology.

The Syrian implementation of the provisions of the Ta'if Agreement would have a significant impact on the meaning and politics of violence in Lebanon moving forward. First, civil violence was no longer an acceptable mechanism for the resolution of intercommunal tensions. Those few groups that did resist the Syrians in opposition to Ta'if were violently suppressed by the Syrian military. The message was clear - the Syrian military infrastructure would suppress anyone opposing the pax-Syriana in Lebanon or who sought to exercise violence as a means of dialogue and political expression.²²⁷ Most importantly for Hezbollah, the implementation of Ta'if stabilized the country by effectively eliminating the routineness of civil violence in the preceding decade of civil war. The Ta'if agreement also provided the political mechanisms for intercommunal negotiation and promoted a secure environment through the Syrian military presence in the country that ensured civil violence would not perpetuate.²²⁸ Second, by sanctioning civil violence and disarming all militias but Hezbollah, the

²²⁶ Ibid., 62.

²²⁷ Ibid., 71.

²²⁸ Ibid., 71.

Syrians interpreted Ta'if as sanctioning forms of violent resistance exclusively against Israel. This meant implicitly supporting Hezbollah's right to armament and resistance of Israeli occupation, as they had consistently been the main actor involved in resistance activity. Thus, of the two kinds of violence experienced in Lebanon during the civil war, civil and resistance violence, the latter was sanctioned to continue after the war's end and implicitly only by Hezbollah.

By applying the instrumental approach to analyzing the events leading up to, and following, the Ta'if Agreement, a strong argument can be made that the interplay of influences surrounding its creation and implementation was the most significant environmental variable affecting Hezbollah's transformation. The costs of opposition were significant and clear. If Hezbollah stood in opposition to the Agreement, not only would they lose the benefit of Syrian support and protection, in all likelihood they would have turned the Syrian security apparatus against them in Lebanon. Furthermore, by adopting the Agreement they not only assured continued Syrian support domestically, but more importantly accepting the provisions of the Agreement provided a level of legitimacy to the organization's resistance against Israel that other regional groups did not have. This created an opportunity for Hezbollah to present itself in Lebanon as a legitimate political actor while simultaneously justifying the struggle of their resistance priority.

The final significant change resulting from the implementation of the Ta'if Agreement was that it placed the Lebanese Army and security services at the command of the Syrian security apparatus. This meant that the Army, and by extension the Lebanese state, did not have the means to exercise effective control over defense and security issues.²²⁹ The major positions in the Army and Lebanese security services were mostly purged and replaced with pro-Syrian officials, individuals the Syrian government were confident would follow their security orders, orders that specifically included co-existing with Hezbollah and its resistance activities. For Hezbollah, the right of violence was protected by the Syrian presence in Lebanon and their interpretation of the security provisions of the Agreement. This all but necessitated that Hezbollah further engage in the Lebanese domestic political system to safeguard the security interpretations of the Ta'if.

The preceding chapters focused on the conditions that allowed Hezbollah to emerge in Lebanon. Up until this point, this chapter has focused on the external factors that provided unique and highly beneficial incentives for Hezbollah to participate in the Lebanese political system and move to non-violent forms of political expression. The end of the Lebanese civil war and Syrian implementation of the Ta'if Agreement created an environment where Hezbollah not only gained a secure environment from which to

²²⁹ Ibid., 72.

pursue their goals, but also a level of legitimacy and approval from the state. Accepting and participating in the Lebanese political system post-Ta'if Agreement was an attractive proposition for the organization based on its benefits, but the cost of rejecting the Agreement was equally, if not more, unattractive. Hezbollah did, however, have to contend with the possible consequences of accepting the Agreement from the ideological purists that came from two positions in the organization: the leadership and their membership. It was now a matter of organizing party leadership in the same coherent direction and consolidating support from the Lebanese public.

5.2 Internal/Organizational/Group Factors

The instrumental approach focuses on the environmental variables presented to the organization in a way that creates a clear picture of the kind, and importance, of outside influences affecting the organization's decision making process. From there, it seems logical that the organization would deduce the appropriate course of action by simply following the cost versus benefit analysis of the relevant variables at play. The limitation of the instrumental approach, however, is that it creates an identity of an organization that is conceptually similar to that of individual consciousness, ignoring that while the practical sum of variables may suggest acting in one way, the emotions and relationships of individuals that comprise the group may steer the organization down a different path. Ultimately, the instrumental approach alone is insufficient for

analyzing the actions of organizations as it ignores the internal dynamics made up of a myriad of individual relationships and power dynamics. The mixture of motivations of individuals comprising Hezbollah's leadership and membership were just as important during this time period as the practical influences examined above.

In order to address the limitations of the instrumental approach this section will draw on Martha Crenshaw's "Organizational Approach" to studying terrorist organizations.²³⁰ The central focus will be the examination of the personal ambitions of Hezbollah's membership, the relationships and interplay within the organization in response to the proposed new direction, and how influential actors in the leadership were successful in consolidating support for the organization's ideological and political transition moving forward to the 1992 election.

The implementation of the Ta'if Agreement smoothed the way for Hezbollah's participation in the reconstituted arena but could not entirely be left to Syria's machinations. The main actors involved – Hezbollah and the Lebanese authorities – had to come to terms with working together and promoting that partnership to their respective constituencies. In other words, while the implementation of the Ta'if gave Hezbollah a perfect opportunity to participate in the Lebanese political system, Hezbollah still needed to address changes in their ideology and organizational makeup

²³⁰ Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, 19.

to facilitate this process while simultaneously maintaining the support of those who subscribed to their original political goals.

Similar situations are not unheard of and usually feature direct or implicit bargaining between the radical political organizations, which become willing to transform themselves into moderate political actors, and the governments that control the political arena. Essential to negotiations is that the radical organization must first renounce its hostility towards the state and agree to abide by the same structural rules applicable to all other political actors participating within the system.²³¹ On the other hand, the state guarantees the transforming organization the protection and rights that are due to legitimate political organizations working in the system. This is exactly the agreement that was negotiated between the parties.

The agreement was absolutely necessary in order for Hezbollah to be viewed as a legitimate state actor that participated in the political process in Lebanon, however, it also necessitated a major ideological change within the organization. Central to Hezbollah's original political machinations and resistance identity was the rejection of the democratic process in Lebanon and promoting the formation of an Islamic state.²³² Obviously Hezbollah could remain in opposition to the new government, but their

²³¹ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 47.

²³² Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction*, 52.

opposition would be a far cry from its original radical stance of outright rejecting the entire political order in the country.

The understanding between Hezbollah and the government meant generally that each actor had to accept the legitimacy of the other, regardless of the ideological or practical difficulties. For Hezbollah, this meant cooperating with a secular government instead of heeding religious imperatives to overthrow it, a move that was resisted by the hardline party ideologues. On the opposite end of the spectrum, to fully participate in the democratic Lebanese political system Hezbollah would be required to broaden its ideological and political appeal in order to secure the necessary public support to be successful. In order to facilitate this transition Hezbollah focused on several key internal and organizational changes. The first involved two significant changes to their stated ideology aimed at broadening their political appeal. In order to secure the support of their more radical constituents their ideology needed to be restated in a way that rationalized compromise with the government from an Islamic perspective. Simultaneously, Hezbollah needed to engender *jihad* to not only the Muslims in Lebanon, but also the Maronite Christian population. This meant creating a national dialogue and understanding of *jihad* as representative of the national interest. Finally, to complete their integration into the function of day to day Lebanese society, Hezbollah responded to the political situation in Lebanon by focusing on addressing shortcomings

of the newly formed government's ability to provide social services to the Shi'a citizens of Lebanon. This helped them appeal ideologically and practically to the general population as much, if not more, than their focus on military resistance to Israel.

In 1989, Hezbollah held their first conclave and revealed the identity of their leaders and cadres. The conclave resulted in the creation of the post of secretary-general, with Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli elected to the position, and the nomination of a seven member *Shura* council.²³³ While Subhi al-Tufayli promoted the original fundamental approach articulated in the Open Letter, the committee took a more moderate position. They understood that under the prevailing conditions in Lebanon ideological rigidity would deny their armed struggle against Israel the national legitimacy necessary to win it strong and continuous Lebanese support.²³⁴ As secretary-general was the foremost post within the organization, Hezbollah was locked in an intense debate about how to proceed given Lebanon's new political environment based in the proper interpretation of *wilayat al-faqih*.²³⁵ In order for Hezbollah's transition to be successful moving forward, the disagreement between the secretary-general and council would have to be resolved.

²³³ Ibid., 160.

²³⁴ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 57.

²³⁵ The concept that the *faqih* (Islamic jurist) serves as the Supreme Leader Shi'ite Muslims globally.

In order to facilitate participation in the elections, Hezbollah required approval of the council and from the *faqih*. The council requested the formal legal opinion of the *faqih* representative, in this case Hezbollah's Religious Leader Khamina or al-Sayyid al-Qa'id, on the legitimacy of participating in the 1992 elections. By interpreting the doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih* in a new light, the committee recommended that participation in the elections be a beneficiary must. This is in accord with the holistic parts of the organization's ideology that speaks to serving the socio-economic and political interests of the people.²³⁶ The committee reasoned that participating in the elections would lead to the achievement of good political results, would be regarded as the leading step towards interaction with others, and as such would be consistent with Hezbollah's views of *greater jihad* discussed in the previous chapter. Khamina agreed, authorizing and supporting participation, a move contested by hard line party followers and secretary-general Subhi al-Tufayli.

With the election approaching, Subhi al-Tufayli's firm, uncompromising political discourse and his repeated references to establishing an Islamic state, which was unprecedented in Lebanese political discourse, backfired domestically and threatened to alienate the party from other political and social movements during a transitional time in Lebanese politics.²³⁷ In order to capitalize on the political opportunity of

²³⁶ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction*, 52.

²³⁷ Ibid., 59.

participating in the Lebanese parliamentary system presented, Hezbollah required that their transformed ideology be endorsed unanimously by party leadership. Thus, in May 1991, Hezbollah held their second conclave, electing the more moderate Abbas al-Musawi to the post of secretary-general and Shaykh Naim Qassem as his deputy.²³⁸ With the leadership unified, the conclave immediately set the written moral precepts upon which political dialogue would be conducted with the Christians and adopting a more transparent approach to their organizational structure moving forward.

Hezbollah would employ the term *infatah* (opening-up) to denote their political discourse, actions, and policies in the era of their political program, or simply to signify their enrolment in Lebanese domestic political life from this point on.²³⁹ The goal of *infatah* for Hezbollah is to participate in an open dialogue policy in a pluralistic setting through interaction and cooperation with all Lebanese sects and communities that comprise the Lebanon, in order to rid Lebanon of its political and social problems and foster national unity. Properly articulating this strategy would be the priority of the committee and Hezbollah's leadership moving forward.

To summarize, the committee concluded that the pros to transitioning into the Lebanese political system vastly outweighed the cons. Participating in Lebanese parliamentary politics is worthwhile since it is viewed as one of the ways Hezbollah

²³⁸ Ibid., 161.

²³⁹ Ibid., 114.

could influence the system and make their voice heard. This applied not only domestically, but also regionally and internationally through the avenues made available to the Lebanese members of parliament. The views of the council and secretary-general needed to be consolidated before the organization could truly pursue this course of action, leading to the election of a new secretary-general. In order to take advantage of this new direction, however, Hezbollah would have find ways to transform their image from radical group to progressive political party among members and non-members alike. Choosing to participate did nothing to guarantee success. Hezbollah needed to find a way to re-invent their image in order to appeal to the general public, but in a way that would not alienate their fundamentalist support base.

One of the potential problems threatening parties that are shifting from radical to mainstream status is the potential backlash, or outright rejection, of core adherents to the organizations original principles and ideology. These members place the ‘purity’ of the organizations original goals and ideological message above demands of practical politics.²⁴⁰ Therefore, these organizations must find a way to convince pious partisans that despite appearances to the contrary, God’s sacred command to promote His rule on earth is not being abandoned. By promoting their new ideological interpretation of

²⁴⁰ For an in-depth discussion of the motivations of hardline radical parties, see Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Mentor Books, 1951).

Islamic teachings, Hezbollah had to be aware of this potential threat and articulate their goals in a way that would not alienate their fundamentalist membership.

Establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon was central to the concept of *jihad* promoted by Hezbollah in the Open Letter. The Islamic mandate to fight injustice and eliminate usurpers clearly includes impious rulers whose governments do not apply Islamic law.²⁴¹ In order to accommodate their transformation Hezbollah needed a reason that could be justified to their hardline party followers that would waive its obligation of *jihad* against Lebanon's heretical government. The reasoning came in a slight alteration to the organization's stance on the promotion of *jihad* and reinforced the flexible definition of *jihad* covered in Chapter 4.

The alteration was drawn from early theological debates over the justifiable courses of action that could be taken by the Muslim community if the abuse of authority necessitated resistance to the state. Abdelaziz Sachedena, an expert on Islamic activism, writes that "in early Shi'ite history it had become firmly established that every pious Muslim was to oppose any nominally Muslim authority regarded as corrupt and degenerate as long as such opposition did not endanger the believers' lives".²⁴² This injunction was previously used to rationalize Arab unwillingness to wage *jihad* against

²⁴¹ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 57.

²⁴² Abdelaziz Sachedena, "Activist Shi'ism in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon", *Accounting for Fundamentalism: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, Martin E Marty and R Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 23-4.

the western powers occupying Arab lands after the Second World War.²⁴³ The objective conditions on Hezbollah in Lebanon were similar to these past constraints and as such made a conciliatory approach by Hezbollah in its relationship with the Lebanese government justifiable to the majority of its radical supporters.

For those unconvinced by the rationalization provided above, Hezbollah placed further emphasis on the interpretation of *jihad* discussed at length in chapter 4 – namely that *jihad* is not limited to the idea of holy war in a purely militant sense. By focusing more closely on *greater jihad*, characterized by the expression of a struggle for the sake of Islam, Hezbollah could easily justify membership in Lebanese Parliament. Islamist MPs would be able to use the parliamentary forum as a means of drawing attention to the sub-standard conditions in Shi'a areas or to corruption that prevented social and economic development. The context meant that Hezbollah would not be foregoing their ongoing struggle but rather directing a portion of their efforts into an arena that would broaden their pursuit of social justice for Muslims. Hezbollah may not have had a monopoly on Shi'a allegiance, but they did manage to convince their fundamentalist base to stay on board.²⁴⁴ This was accomplished because of a desire amongst individuals to be deeply associated with a holy war against Israel and a clear realization that the

²⁴³ Michael C. Hudson, "The Islamic Factor in Syrian and Iraqi Politics", *Islam in the Political Process*, ed. James Piscatori (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 73-97.

²⁴⁴ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 62.

geopolitical factors that had come together to produce the opportunity to legitimize this struggle for the Islamic community were simply too outstanding to reject.

Hezbollah needed to balance their message in a way that would not alienate the radical elements of the party but that could also convince the doubters among the general public that the organization's aims moving forward were for the good of the nation and would not be detrimental to the broader Lebanese community. While Christians were likely the most concerned about Hezbollah's political designs, many Muslims shared a level of apprehension about Hezbollah's political aims.²⁴⁵ This meant that if Hezbollah hoped to successfully integrate into mainstream political life and legitimize *jihad* as the expression of the national will they would need to mitigate, or preferably alter, these negatives attitudes.

The conscious effort of *infitah* made by Hezbollah allowed them to control the declaration of their goals, strategies, and organizational makeup to the public. This lifted the veil of secrecy that surrounded the group since its creation and afforded the organization the opportunity to emphasize key ideological concepts based on their target audience.²⁴⁶ This common political tactic used by parties in democratic countries is known as ideological ambiguity.²⁴⁷ Hezbollah expresses moderate political goals to

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 63.

²⁴⁶ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction*, 47.

²⁴⁷ A. Vincent, "The Ambiguity of Ideology" *Politics*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1996)

the general public while at the same time reinforcing their resistance agenda whose roots lay in concepts of *greater* and *lesser jihad*. In doing so, the organization has been successful in accommodating and changing their identity within the guidelines of Islamic ideology and in ways that relieve tension in the community at large.²⁴⁸

Hezbollah employed a bottom-up Islamization strategy, one that stressed that their religious and political ideology defends the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon. As a political program, however, establishing an Islamic state is not practical because of the confessional and sectarian nature of Lebanon and because the majority of the Lebanese population is in opposition. Ultimately, Hezbollah shelved their original political ideology to focus on a more pragmatic political program in order to appeal to the largest possible sector of the Lebanese population.

By 1990, roughly a year since the Ta'if Agreement had been signed and began being implemented, Lebanon was preparing to hold its first elections in over a decade.²⁴⁹ This was the perfect opportunity for Hezbollah to participate in the Lebanese political system to show the sincerity of their transformation and simultaneously to solidify the group's political legitimacy by acquiring parliamentary representation. Similar to any mainstream party, Hezbollah had begun operating a wide network of social and public

²⁴⁸ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction*, 185.

²⁴⁹ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 49.

services in the Bekaa valley and Beirut's *dahiyeh* in order to secure support.²⁵⁰ These kinds of activities are regularly undertaken by political parties to secure the support of their constituents, but Hezbollah's reputation at this point was almost entirely tied to their resistance activity against the Israelis. These resistance activities gained the party a considerable amount of respect from the public, but it was still unclear how the Party of God would fare in non-violent political activity.

From an organizational standpoint, by consolidating the direction of the leadership and maintaining the continued support of the majority of its membership, Hezbollah had accomplished two of their primary objectives in their process of transition. Their focus now was on establishing a broader appeal to the Lebanese public in order to foster relationships with individuals that typically would not affiliate themselves with the party. Hezbollah's ability to provide social and public services in Muslim areas had a significant impact on increasing the party's appeal.²⁵¹ These services were offered in a professional atmosphere that would not have been possible without careful planning and special attention to social and public service delivery systems, which is the key organizational transformation that allowed Hezbollah to fully embrace their new direction. The civil war had created extensive administrative and service gaps throughout Lebanon, leading many militias to create mini-public administrations in

²⁵⁰ The *dahiyeh* is predominantly Shi'a Muslim suburb south of Beirut composed of several towns and municipalities.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 81.

territory they controlled.²⁵² This included a variety of services like electricity, road repair, and educational and health services among others.²⁵³ Disbanding the militias in the post-Ta'if period created a void that Hezbollah had the resources to address, in part because of their level of sponsorship from Iran but more so because they had been providing these services for several years already.

A significant difference between Hezbollah and other militias in the years leading to the Ta'if changes was the manner in which they were able to fund their public services. Whereas other groups were forced to rely on exploiting government resources to support their administrations, Hezbollah was heavily subsidized by Iranian institutions.²⁵⁴ This gave Hezbollah a level of moral superiority in the eyes of the public over their opposition, namely Amal, because they could never be accused of having taken advantage of the disintegrating Lebanese state.²⁵⁵ Hezbollah's disciplined nature and backing from Tehran helped the organization reinforce their image as the best alternative to not only the other militias, but also to the state.

The large scale level of investment from Tehran gave another significant advantage to Hezbollah, the ability to address the scope and variety of needs of Shi'a

²⁵² Ibid., 82.

²⁵³ For a complete list of Hezbollah's social services from 1986-2002 see Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 83-87.

²⁵⁴ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 82.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 83.

Muslims in southern Lebanon that exceeded those of other Lebanese communities. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the areas where there was the heaviest Shi'a concentration, the Bekaa Valley and the South, had been neglected in terms of infrastructure and public services since Ottoman rule. The destruction and deterioration of already minimal and venerable infrastructure from both the civil war and Israeli invasions worsened the situation and hastened immigration to Beirut – where services were already marginalized for many of the same reasons.²⁵⁶ When Hezbollah took control of the *dahiyeh* in 1989, they found themselves responsible for roughly half a million inhabitants that were straining the insufficient infrastructure to the verge of collapse.²⁵⁷ By tackling the infrastructure issues in the region Hezbollah increased their appeal to the community and further reinforced their distinct identity from the Lebanese state, one that portrayed them as a competent competitor in providing for the needs of the Lebanese people.

With Hezbollah offering the majority of social and public services in the region and with the organization's military involvement resisting the Israeli occupation, Hezbollah became indispensable to the southern Lebanese community. Former Deputy Secretary General of Hezbollah Naim Qassem writes,

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 84.

²⁵⁷ To see how Hezbollah tackled the specific infrastructure issues see Qassem, 83-87.

“Social work serves to enrich supporters’ confidence in the viability of the Party’s cause and course, as it cooperates, collaborates and joins forces to remain strong and tenacious in its political and resistance roles. This fosters humane and social environments of joint responsibility, thus shielding the Resistance from social catastrophes – those from which the government simply alienated itself”.²⁵⁸

Through this cooperation and collaboration, Hezbollah has successfully intertwined themselves in the Lebanese communal and political lives in an administrative capacity while simultaneously cultivating an identity that remains distinct from the state itself.

Hezbollah reinforced their integration by remaining faithful to their Shi’a constituency by employing a bottom-up Islamization process and working within the Lebanese state’s political and administrative structures while simultaneously establishing Islamic institutions across Lebanese civil society.²⁵⁹ Once the leadership had been unified in the same direction, they successfully reinforced their relationships with existing members, simultaneously endeared themselves to a larger portion of the Lebanese community, and created the foundation to establish positive relationships with individuals who were apathetic or hostile to the organization at their outset. Through their vast network of social services, Hezbollah is able to earn political capital in Lebanon, capital they spend on acquiring cultural and socio-economic influence in line with its mission of accomplishing social justice according to the tenets of Shi’a

²⁵⁸ Qassem, *Hizbullah*, 86.

²⁵⁹ Alagha, *Hizbullah’s Identity Construction*, 60.

jurisprudence, effectively combining their resistance identity with the broader Lebanese political identity.

5.3 Conclusion

The Ta'if Agreement and subsequent decision to participate in electoral politics were two pivotal events in shaping Hezbollah's identity and the Lebanese political landscape moving forward. The Agreement marked the beginning of Hezbollah's gradual adoption of pragmatic policies aimed at coordination and cooperation, rather than conflict, with the Lebanese state. By participating in post-Ta'if Lebanese politics, Hezbollah protects the legitimacy of their resistance identity and maintains an environment for its continued promotion. Thus, Hezbollah's participation in a political system it previously deemed inimical to its religio-political beliefs and their initial goals of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon is for pragmatic reasons that revolve around the needs to safeguard the resistance, their weapons, and their right of violence against Israeli occupation.

The logic of operating within the bounds of the Lebanese state prevailed over the logic of the revolution. Relying on the progressive nature of Shi'a jurisprudence, Hezbollah was able to successfully remold, construct, and interpret its authority in such a way as to render legitimacy to their participation in a pluralist polity based upon the quota system and patronage. Accompanying this ideological shift were periods of

progress and development within the social service context that constructively reinforced its humanistic agenda, allowing the organization to legitimize itself through the accumulation, conversion, and transformation of social, economic, and symbolic capitals into political capital. In this way, Hezbollah was capable of adopting mainly non-violent forms of political expression that were functional in a multi-confessional and multi-religious society without compromising their Islamic ideology or the legitimacy of their resistance identity.

The instrumental approach is based on the assumption that acts of violence are a deliberate choice by a political actor. The organization, as a unit, acts to achieve collective values, often involving radical changes in political and social conditions.²⁶⁰ The pure cost versus benefit analysis of the organization means that an increase in cost or a decrease in reward for violent political expression will make it less likely. The organizational approach, however, focuses on internal processes within the group using violence. Violent political expression is explained as the result of an organization's struggle for survival, usually in an extremely competitive environment.²⁶¹ Leaders ensure organizational maintenance by offering varied incentives to followers, not all of which involve the pursuit of the group's stated political purposes. Both explanations are necessary to effectively analyze Hezbollah's political transformation. The changing

²⁶⁰ Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, 13.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

political and security environment created by the Ta'if Agreement and Israeli withdrawal created considerable incentives for Hezbollah to pursue non-violent means of political expression and include themselves in legitimate Lebanese politics. The cost versus benefit analysis of the instrumental approach, however, is insufficient when analyzing Hezbollah's endeavor into social services. By adopting non-violent means of political expression Hezbollah effectively managed to create a system of incentives for both radical and non-radical individuals, ensuring the survival and expansion of their organization moving forward.

Studying and understanding terrorism as a political phenomenon is challenged primarily by questions involving how it should be defined and to whom it should be applied. Hezbollah's political transition shows us that while the organization has embraced violent means of political expression in the past typically associated with definitions of terrorism, terrorism is by no means how the organization, or its members, view its struggle to express itself politically.

Political violence as a means of political expression will not be ending anytime soon. Moving forward, however, it is important for academics studying political violence to be conscious of the pejorative nature of definitions of terrorism and how those definitions frame the narrative of their research in terms of "Us vs Them". Both the definitions and the narrative they create inevitably lead to bias and compromise

objectivity by focusing more on what the organization has done in its relationship with the state, and focusing less what the state, has done in its relationship to the organization. As I've shown in this thesis, that relationship is much more complex than an "Us vs Them" comparative narrative is able to define.

The case of Hezbollah's transition into non-violent forms of political expression shows that understanding terrorism as an identity instead of a tactic may satisfy the perception of an "Us vs Them" struggle, but is flawed when applying it to objective academic analysis and attempts to understand the organizations that use terrorism as a means of political expression. Terrorism isn't an identity, it's a tactic used by groups at various times, one that may become more or less attractive based on circumstances shaped by both external variables and organizational dynamics – one that behooves us to reassess our method of study for the sake of objectivity in efforts to better understand political violence moving forward.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The final chapter of this thesis is structured into three parts. The first will briefly examine Hezbollah's participation in both resistance and social welfare activities in Lebanon since 1992. While not an exhaustive history, the aim of presenting the material is an attempt to gain insight into whether Hezbollah's political transition can be considered an expression or rejection of the sectarian system in Lebanon. Only after the Lebanese political system made changes to be more inclusionary did Hezbollah choose to participate, suggesting that expressing their political agency legitimately in an imperfect system is preferable to illegitimate violent means of political expression. The second section is focused on some general observations of arguable shortcomings in International Relations academic research. The problem with state centric definitions and theories about power and legitimacy will need to be addressed when studying violent conflict/terrorism in the future. The final section will build on these theoretical problems and aims to address some of the difficulties with defining terrorism, concluding by making some recommendations for dealing with these challenges in academic research moving forward.

6.1 After the 1992 Election: Hezbollah Post-Transition

Hezbollah's ideology and core principles are rooted in their religious beliefs, and, as such, have remained constant throughout their political and organizational development. At the same time, the organization has shown a capacity to adapt their discourse to the changing security and political environment. Through a political savvy articulation, Hezbollah's "right to violence" binds legitimacy, authority, and violence together in ways that generally tend to be the sole purview of the sovereign state. Similarly, Hezbollah has adopted many of the duties and responsibilities traditionally belonging to the state through their vast social welfare network. By combining their armed resistance agenda with social welfare policy, Hezbollah continues to transmit the concept of resistance to the population as one around which life and everyday action revolves.

In contrast to Hezbollah's foreign policy, which has shown remarkable continuity throughout its development, the organization's view of their role within Lebanon has shifted considerably since their original formulation. Hezbollah today has created a social welfare network that aims to transform Lebanon's poor Shi'a neighborhoods into self-reliant districts.²⁶² Perhaps most surprisingly, even with Hezbollah's active participation in Lebanese parliament these services are funded

²⁶² Gleis and Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study*, 67.

entirely by the party, relieving a substantial amount of social and economic pressure on the state itself.²⁶³ In this way Hezbollah is very similar to other global social movements that focus their efforts on obtaining and providing social goods and services to their main constituency. Hezbollah itself excels because they are capable of funding these services on their own, regardless of support from the state apparatus. Their network includes social services such as water sanitation, rural development, construction projects, education, hospitals, and perhaps most importantly to their constituency they directly fund the reconstruction of every home destroyed as a result of the conflict with Israel. This makes Hezbollah the largest provider of social welfare services in Lebanon, ahead of the state itself.²⁶⁴ This does not mean, however, that resistance operations have ceased or become less of a priority. Simply, Hezbollah has continued to expand the focus of their political identity since 1992 to include an increasing number of non-violent enterprises in Lebanon.

Since the late 1980's Hezbollah has paid particular attention to developing their social welfare network. The first subsidiary group to be established by the organization was the Jihad al-Binaa Association. This organization focuses on construction and development of neighborhoods damaged during the Israeli conflict.²⁶⁵ This includes the re-construction of every home, shop, and public utility structure damaged by Israeli

²⁶³ Ibid., 67.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 68.

²⁶⁵ Qassem, *Hizbullah*, 83.

raids since 1991.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, the organization provides waste collection and clean drinking water in the southern territories where there is no access to these public services at no cost to the residents.²⁶⁷ Hezbollah also founded the Islamic Health Organization (IHO) that manages nine hospitals, as well as sixteen fixed and three mobile infirmaries, that cater to fifty one southern villages.²⁶⁸ These are only a handful of the social services provided by Hezbollah in Lebanon, services they believe “expose the extent of government negligence and deficiency in their fundamental duties”.²⁶⁹ These services are aimed at enriching confidence and support in the viability of Hezbollah’s cause and course in both their political and resistance goals.

Hezbollah was able to increase these services in part because in 1999 Israel elected General Ehud Barak who had campaigned on the promise that he would withdraw from Lebanon within twelve months of assuming office.²⁷⁰ Although it was widely believed in Lebanon that the violence against the Jewish state would stop after the Israeli withdrawal, Hezbollah avoided confirming this publicly.²⁷¹ The withdrawal finally occurred on May 24, 2000, starting a time of extraordinary celebration in Lebanon, especially in the South, and displaced residents immediately flooded back to

²⁶⁶ Official figures provided by the organization can be found at <http://tarmeem.org.lb/eng/datapages/termeem/beginning.htm>

²⁶⁷ Qassem, *Hizbullah*, 84.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁷⁰ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 88.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

their liberated homes and villages.²⁷² Very little associated violence occurred during this time, certainly none of the anticipated revenge killings of SLA or Israeli supporters. Overall, that period was remarkably orderly and humane, especially in comparison to the violent history of Lebanon in the preceding decades.

The Israeli withdrawal was important because it was considered a major victory for Lebanon, and more specifically Hezbollah, but also because it created a crossroads for the organization. Should the organization focus on Lebanese politics and themes, such as government, or should their focus remain on the resistance priority in both Lebanon and the Middle East? The situation was in no way as dire as the decision required post-Ta'if, but Hezbollah would need to find a way to justify continued resistance with the Israeli withdrawal. After internal party discussions it was decided the resistance identity would remain the primary focus of the organization, citing the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights as territory that belonged to Lebanon and thus a justification to maintain their military posture on the pretext that the Israeli withdrawal had not been completed.²⁷³

The focus here is not an exhaustive look at Hezbollah after the 1992 election, but rather to show that while the organization has evolved considerably from their early militant beginnings its *raison d'être* remains resistance activity. At the same time, the

²⁷² Ibid., 90.

²⁷³ Ibid., 91.

group's followers trust and support Hezbollah because of their successful record of providing a functioning welfare system to the Shi'a community within Lebanon, in addition to their military activities. Similarly to how Hezbollah was able to capitalize on the environmental conditions post-Ta'if by utilizing a level of ideological flexibility, the organization continues to transform themselves and their message in such a way that legitimizes their position within Lebanese political institutions while simultaneously reinforcing the dialogue that perpetuates their right to violent resistance.

By engaging in a pluralistic process, Hezbollah shifted their political strategy from cooptation to contestation, and finally, to exercising empowerment. Thus, Hezbollah moved from being a closed sectarian social movement to an open national actor engaging in Lebanese domestic political life. Due to the absence of certain social and political circumstances, Hezbollah has adopted a strategy of self-preservation, which entails indefinitely postponing the destruction of the Lebanese sectarian system and establishment of an Islamic state in its place.²⁷⁴ This has led many scholars to suggest that Hezbollah derives their legitimacy strictly from political participation in Lebanon. Krista Weirand, for example, writes that:

Hezbollah's domestic legitimacy comes primarily from its willingness to participate within the political system in Lebanon rather than outside the status quo by acting as a legal political party and by having representatives in the

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 152.

Lebanese parliament and cabinet. It is also a result of Hezbollah's willingness to adapt to the demands of the public in order to maintain domestic support.²⁷⁵

Viewing legitimacy in narrow terms such as this betrays the complex ways in which Hezbollah has politicized Shi'a culture to construct their own "resistance society" as an ideal political community. Hezbollah's activities then, and further the means by which they acquire legitimacy in the Lebanese context, must be understood well beyond either their military or parliamentary services. Thus, the question of whether Hezbollah is an expression or rejection of the Lebanese sectarian system is less important than understanding how the organization articulates their particular notion of political community, and then how they create a cultural, material, and political-economic reality around that dialogue.²⁷⁶

6.2 Questions Facing International Relations Moving Forward

The case of Hezbollah and their articulation of their "resistance identity" is a clear example in which the typical definitions and theories of International Relations (IR) faces significant challenges. Rather than a positive affirmation of Hezbollah's resistance identity as the result of a mixture of communal identity around effective institutions, theories of IR and their comprehension of sovereignty frames actors like

²⁷⁵ Krista Weigand, *Bombs and Ballots: Governance by Islamist Terrorist and Guerilla Groups* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 115-116.

²⁷⁶ Abboud and Muller, *Rethinking Hizballah*, 39.

Hezbollah, by virtue of acting outside the state, as problematic by definition.²⁷⁷ Simply, theories and definitions in IR that articulate legitimate authority are entirely too state centric and serve to reinforce the interests of the more powerful states at the expense of the weaker non-state actors. Whether the result of pragmatic political concerns allegedly for the sake of international order and stability, supposed commitments to methodological elegance, or simply intellectual lethargy, the prevailing prosaic accounts of sovereignty serve particular power interests and as such should be re-examined to determine their efficacy in IR research moving forward.

In an attempt to address the issues surrounding the narrow application of categories and definitions standard in IR discourse, a major research agenda could start with questioning the definition of the core focus of International Relations: the state. The emergence of non-territorial forms of governance globally, such as Hezbollah, is challenging the context in which we perceive legitimacy and authority in IR.²⁷⁸ The cultural-political trajectory of Hezbollah speaks directly to the type of processes and patterns that tend to fall outside the narrow attention of traditional Western IR research.²⁷⁹ By examining the world through a lens that has been preconfigured by the popular focuses of IR theory, we not only fail to include actors such as Hezbollah, but more importantly, we fail to consider the diverse forms of legitimacy, authority, and

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 40.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 126.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

violence represented by these actors.²⁸⁰ As a result, this leaves our research hampered by morally biased and emotionally charged language and definitions such as terrorism.

6.3 Conclusion: The Question of Terrorism

Traditional research in International Relations accords a heavy emphasis on the legitimacy of colonial-era Western conceptualizations of the state. This state centric thinking in IR creates a narrative where the historical state monopoly on violence is increasingly insufficient as a means to discuss current accounts of globalization, especially in the post-colonial Middle East. Thinking of power and legitimate political agency in these narrow terms serves to reinforce the binary discourse that dominates current accounts of globalization, the one side focusing on the absolute sovereignty of the state and the other with the possibility this sovereignty is being eroded. As a consequence, academics struggle with its delegitimizing effects on forms of legitimacy, authority, and violence that fall outside of these state centric definitions, such as terrorism.²⁸¹ The study of terrorism faces the problem of not only distinguishing it from other forms of violence, but also of setting clear theoretical bounds around their field of inquiry.²⁸² How can contemporary research get around the popular, but generally biased and confusing, definitions of terrorism so as to reach a scientific one? There are

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 127.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Michel Wieviorka, "Terrorism in the Context of Academic Research" in *Terrorism in Context*, ed. Martha Crenshaw (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 598.

multiple ways that academics are trying to address the question, but I will finish this thesis focusing on two. The first is to view terrorism as the result of a social, economic, and political equation, and then to focus instead on the actors and their actions. This approach aims to dismantle the pejorative and particularly distressing nature of traditional definitions of terrorism. The second approach remains focused on the actors and their actions, however, they do so in the hopes that their research will possibly refine the definition of terrorism by isolating other attributes.²⁸³ While both viewpoints can be useful for studying terrorism, the failure in these approaches is that both use traditional IR definitions of power, authority, and legitimacy as the mold in which they attempt to fit their redefined versions of terrorism.

Most scholars attempt to work around the challenge of defining terrorism by distinguishing two sorts of problems, or kinds of, terrorism. They attempt to compare “limited terrorism” to “terrorism without boundaries”.²⁸⁴ By doing so they attempt to make a distinction between terrorism as a method of action, a tool used by certain groups to attain a political end, and terrorism as the logic of action, where terror is the end in itself.²⁸⁵ This ignores, however, that terrorism is often only one part of a complex political or geopolitical process. Equating acts of violence performed by those who pursue a specific purpose, but have the means to abandon terrorism in their political

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 601.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 602.

environment, to acts of violence by organizations that neither foresee nor expect an end to terrorism is a serious problem within terrorism literature.

The concept of terrorism is often argued not to be a scientific category, but a biased observation from the general public or, at best, from the persons actively involved or directly concerned by the phenomenon. Although the majority can easily agree that the pejorative nature of definitions of terrorism should be avoided at worst, and deconstructed at best, there is no impetus on academics to begin their research with finding a suitable way to redefine the term. Rather, its definition can be derived from the outcome instead of the starting point of our analyses, a conclusion rather than a presupposition.²⁸⁶ In doing away with stereotypes we accept there is potentially no cause and effect hierarchy can be applied in a general way to terrorism. This puts us in uncomfortable territory, however, because by accepting that without a general cause and effect correlation to terrorism there may be no real way to develop effective policy recommendations. The idea that terrorism is “bad” and should be stopped is a pervasive one. That said, there remains a possibility that by redefining our own professional standards and intellectual relation to this dangerous subject that we find the answers to effective counter-terrorism policy that so far have arguably evaded IR researchers.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 599.

The study of terrorism is a research subject filled with challenges from all sides. This can possibly include physical danger, but more importantly it often challenges our conceptualizations of morality and justice. This thesis is in no way aimed toward expressing political sympathies with Hezbollah. Rather, the goal of this research has been to provide a study of Hezbollah that approached the topic from alternative methods of reasoning than the traditional IR accounts and explore rational possibilities for alternative articulations of political power and legitimacy.

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